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HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH

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Dec. 8, 1920

Best Wishes

To Betty

From Dad



“OH, VIRGINIA!”

Oh, Virginia!

BY HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH

Author of "The Letty Books"

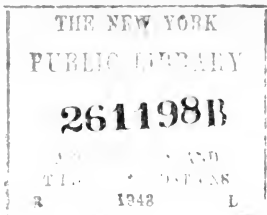
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Oh, Virginia!

Introduction

VIRGINIA she was named, but she has always said "It's too grandly awful," and she is usually called Jinks, except when she has been in scrapes. Somehow that happens pretty often with Jinks, but perhaps it is not always her fault. Jinks has an imagination, and when it is working it promptly moves her to action, and no one is more surprised than she when the result is disaster. If the neighborhood is laughing half the time at Jinks, and the other half is wondering what that child will do next, it is largely because she is left too much to herself by a mother and father who have not realized how much she needs them. When the biggest scrape of all came along, Mrs. Weatherby was there to help straighten things out, and what the scrape was and how it was happily ended is told in the story.

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Oh, Virginia!

CHAPTER I

A TEA PARTY

GEORGIANA peered out through a screened window at the riotous heat of the July day.

"Where are we going for our tea party?" she asked, indifferently.

"Down under the lilacs; it's peachy there," answered Alice, the serene. "And we're going to have apricot tarts. Bridget said we might. Come on, it's time to start."

"Who is going to carry the basket?"

"Why, we are, of course. Goodness, it isn't twenty miles away!"

"Like Winchester?" chimed in her sister. "Or was it Sheridan who was twenty miles away? I always pick the wrong one, ever since I tried to say it in school and the F. P. prompted me; do you remember, Alice?" she asked, giggling.

Oh, Virginia!

"Are books allowed?" asked Georgiana, leading the way to the door and then pausing to survey the stretch of sunny path with disfavor. "I guess I'll have to have my parasol."

"How can you bear to be bothered with one! Here, little Kate, you run up-stairs for it, while we start on," directed Alice, shifting her rather heavy basket to the other arm.

Little Kate—the adjective to distinguish her from her mother, after whom she was named—turned amiably and ran up-stairs in quest of her cousin's sunshade. Personally, little Kate regarded the carrying of a parasol not only as a nuisance but an affectation. However, she was too polite to say so to Georgiana.

Georgiana Harding was on a visit to her "country cousins," as she called them to herself, and this tea party was one of the many mild festivities arranged especially in her honor. When Georgiana heard Alice's suggestion to have their tea in the garden, Georgiana thought it sounded quite elegant, and hoped there would be other guests present; neighbors invited to "drop in for a cup of tea," with thin bread and butter and rich little

cakes. But, finding that the affair meant merely lugging an old kettle, thick white crockery cups and saucers and an alcohol lamp down under the lilac bushes and having a regular child's tea party composed of their three selves, she lost interest. She would have preferred to stay at home in the cool, darkened library and read "The Chaplet of Pearls," but of course she must do whatever Alice and the others suggested.

The tea party pursued the course of all such events. The bottle of denatured alcohol had been forgotten and must be fetched; there were no teaspoons provided, and the tea was stirred with branches of lilac stem, quite as a matter of course; the jam in the sandwiches was of a kind nobody liked, and the cake fell out of the basket and got covered with bits of dried grass. But nobody seemed to mind; certainly Alice and little Kate did not; so Georgiana put on her best company manners, and overlooked them graciously. She patiently picked off the grass blades, for she was fond of chocolate cake.

"I'm going to make toast over the lamp," little Kate announced presently. "Having

jam on the bread won't matter. Perhaps we'll like it, toasted."

"You can't toast bread over a flame," objected Georgiana. "It will burn."

"Oh, no, it won't. I've done it lots of times, you'll see. And let's not eat all the apricot tarts till the toast is ready."

Georgiana was not particularly interested in toast-making, and began idly to investigate her surroundings. The lilac bushes had been planted so as to form a small recess the size of a large room, which was a favorite resort of the children, serving in every capacity from doll house to theatre. Georgiana pushed aside the bushes at the back and uttered an exclamation of surprise and delight.

"Oh, what a beautiful spot! Why didn't we have tea down there? Alice, you didn't tell me your place was so large."

"It isn't. That's the Babcocks', next door. Our lilacs are the boundary line."

"It must be a beautiful place," sighed Georgiana. "Are the Babcocks very rich?"

"As Cræsus, I guess," replied little Kate enthusiastically, allowing her toast to scorch while she peered over Georgiana's shoulder.

“ I’d like to see the place. Do you know the Babcocks? ”

“ Oh, you’ll see enough of it, as soon as the F. P. gets back,” little Kate assured her. “ Oh, dear, I’ve spoiled my toast, just as it was almost done. Shove over the basket, Alice.”

“ And who is the ‘ F. P.’? ” asked Georgiana languidly, only half interested. She was already building air castles around the big white house, half glimpsed through the trees on the hill.

“ She is —— ” Alice was beginning, and interrupted herself with a scream.

It was so very unusual for the serene Alice to scream that every one knew there must be a good reason for it. There was, an excellent reason. Little Kate, in her zeal of toast-making, had bent too close, and her light cotton frock had fluttered across the flame of the spirit lamp and was scorching ominously. Even as Alice screamed a light flame leaped up and licked hungrily at the front breadth.

Georgiana lost her head completely and crouched down among the bushes, hiding her face in her hands and moaning: “ She’ll be killed, she’ll be killed! ” Alice sprang to her

sister's side, and began to tear off the burning frock. At that instant they were all startled by a sudden crashing of branches and a girl slid down the trunk of a great oak tree that bordered the lilacs.

Without a word the newcomer snatched up a rug which had been spread on the ground, scattering cups and plates far and wide in the act, wrapped Kate in it and tumbled her unceremoniously to the ground. There she rolled her back and forth, back and forth, until both she and Kate were breathless and exhausted.

"Now it's out, I guess," announced the rescuer calmly, bending to remove the rug.

Just then Georgiana, somewhat tardily recovering her senses, seized the kettle of lukewarm water and began to pour its contents with reckless generosity over both little Kate and her preserver.

"Don't—don't, Georgiana," admonished Alice sharply, but too late. "You'll drown them both."

Little Kate sat up, sputtering and sneezing.

"The F. P. to the rescue, as usual," she gasped, as soon as she could speak. "Thank you, Georgiana; I'm sure I'm out, now."

Then Georgiana for the first time had thought for the newcomer. She turned to inspect a thin, short-haired girl, rather tall and lanky for her age, and without any real claim to prettiness except her heavy hair, and that too nearly approached red in color, in Georgiana's mind, to be desirable. Her skin was tanned and, alas for romance, freckled; her nose had an upward tilt and Georgiana could not determine whether her eyes, set very far apart, were brown or blue.

She was dressed in an exquisitely embroidered linen frock which town-bred Georgiana recognized as Parisian made, but it was streaked with dust and grime from the oak tree, while a long slit from hem to waistband testified to her fireman's pole descent.

For a moment or two all conversation was turned into the channel of Kate's predicament and her narrow escape from worse; and then Georgiana, in her "best manner," suggested that she be introduced to little Kate's preserver.

"I know who you are, all right," laughed the newcomer, "only I don't just happen to remember your name. The girls have

talked a lot about you," and she held out her hand.

"My name is Georgiana," replied that young lady graciously, "and I can guess at your initials, anyway. F. P."

Her three companions looked at one another and laughed.

"Well, that's one name for me, at any rate. But if you don't care for that, you may call me 'Jinks.'"

"'Jinks'? Surely that isn't your name!"

"I'm like the villain in the play; I won't reveal my real name—it is too grandly awful. But you've got one almost as bad," she added sympathetically. "What do people call you?"

"Why—Georgiana," replied the owner of that name, a little taken aback, for she had considered her name dignified and rather elegant.

"All that? Well, if you don't mind, *I'll* call you just plain George. It has a sort of chummy sound, hasn't it, girls?"

"Yes, hasn't it?" agreed little Kate. "I wonder we didn't think of it ourselves. But you've done the thinking for us for so long, Jinks, that I guess we've got out of the habit."

But Alice saw that Georgiana did not like the proposed change, and put in a negative.

“I think Georgiana would prefer her own name; she’s been used to it all her life,” she said.

“You might call me by my initials, ‘G. H.,’ the way they call you,” put in Georgiana politely, anxious to keep in good favor.

“The plot thickens! As it happens, those are not my real initials.”

Georgiana was beginning to get a trifle bored.

“Well, if Jinks isn’t your real name, and ‘F. P.’ aren’t your real initials, what is real?” she demanded a little crossly.

“If you swear to secrecy, I’ll tell you the truth. My name is so magnificent that I could never live up to it, although Miss Farnham—she’s my governess, or jail-keeper, or however you choose to describe her—tells me a dozen times a day that I should—live up to my name, I mean. So we girls decided that the only character worth living up to with a name like that was a Princess; and as I can’t be a real Princess—unless I wait till I grow up and marry a foreign one, and they aren’t desirable

—I've decided to be a fairy princess. 'F. P.' Catch on? And my mission in life is to do good, secretly when I can, and openly when found out."

Georgiana was distinctly disappointed to find that the somewhat mysterious initials had no more significance than the carrying out of a game.

"Oh, child's play," she responded, with more of a patronizing air than she really intended. "Come on, let's go back to the house; shall we?"

"As you've emptied the kettle and I can't make Jinks any tea, we might as well. Besides, I'm wet," ended Kate with a little sneeze.

"You certainly are, and will catch your death of cold," ejaculated Alice with tardy prudence. "Run along ahead, and we'll all carry the things."

Kate gathered up the kettle and the offending lamp, as her share of the burden, and stepped out onto the path.

"You are coming, too, Jinks?" she asked coaxingly.

"Wish I could, but I'm going to 'catch' something a lot worse than a cold if I don't get

home before Miss Farnham sees me." She glanced at her torn frock and grimy hands. "I think my cue is to copy the gentleman the Last Minstrel sings about. I, too, would be

" 'Unwept, unhonored and unsung.' "

As she recited the line, in a dramatic, pseudo-bass voice, Jinks moved across to the back of the recess and swept aside the bushes with a Hamletesque gesture. Bowing, as to an imaginary audience, she disappeared.

Georgiana turned to her cousins with a puzzled glance.

"Who is she, really?" she asked. "And where is she going?"

"Why, she's Jinks, and she's going home," answered Alice simply. "Do run along, Kate; you're shivering."

Picking up the basket, lighter than when it came, Alice walked briskly up the garden path. Georgiana unfurled her parasol and followed, wondering.

CHAPTER II

MAKING THE BEST OF IT

MRS. HARDING met the children at the foot of the veranda steps. At sight of little Kate's torn, scorched frock, and general air of wet bedraggledness, she frowned.

"I see you have been playing with Jinks again," she said in a worried voice. "When did she get back?"

"Oh, you mustn't blame Jinks for this, Mother! Indeed you must not, *please*," cried little Kate earnestly. "Why, it was Jinks who saved my life, wasn't it, girls?"

"Such loyalty," murmured her mother, turning Kate around for inspection. "I see you are ready to go through fire and water for your friend."

"Oh, Mother, how can you be so sarcastic and—and horrid about it!" exclaimed little Kate with an angry sob. "Tell her, Alice; she will know you are fair."

Mrs. Harding felt the sting of this reproof keenly.

“My precious little Kate! Don’t I know you are always fair! Why, that strong sense of justice is one of your beautifullest virtues, my pet. If I have been unfair to Jinks, I am very sorry. Let us hear all about it.”

“I don’t see why you are always so ready to blame Jinks for things,” replied little Kate, only half appeased. “She is always trying to do good. Nobody understands her.”

“I wonder if that is true?” said Mrs. Harding, half to herself. “But let us hear what happened. How did you burn your dress, childie?”

“I was toasting bread over the alcohol lamp and my skirt caught fire. Alice rubbed some of it out, but just then Jinks appeared and rolled me in the steamer rug. She bumped my head awfully, but she put me out.”

“It was splendid, really,” chimed in Alice. “Wasn’t it, Georgiana? The way Jinks knew right what to do, on the spot. Little Kate might have been badly burned, Mother.”

“I thought you were doing pretty good work yourself,” responded Georgiana who

had so far listened in silence. "It was awfully brave of you to pull at the flames with your bare hands, Alice. Didn't it hurt you?"

For the first time Mrs. Harding noticed that Alice was standing with one hand behind her, and a look of pain, which she had been trying in vain to suppress, contracting the usually serene lines of her face.

"Why, my precious daughter, what is it? Let me see at once, please. This is more serious than I thought. You really put out the fire on Kate's skirt with your fingers?"

"It was only scorching—or anyhow, just beginning to blaze. I couldn't think of anything else to do," explained Alice, yielding the smarting hand to her mother's inspection with mingled relief and chagrin. Would she never learn to be a hero?

The burns were not very deep, but they were exceedingly painful, and Mrs. Harding hurried Alice up-stairs to have them dressed.

"Shall you feel like going to the party to-night?" she asked, when the last bandage had been adjusted before an admiring audience consisting of little Kate and Georgiana.

"What party?" demanded all three girls in surprise.

"Oh, I forgot. I was on my way down to the lilac bushes to tell you all when this almost accident put it entirely out of my head. Mrs. Elwell telephoned over to say that the party is to be to-night instead of to-morrow. She said she had just learned that several of the boys and girls thought it was to-morrow night and she could not understand how the mistake happened, for she had planned it for this evening, from the beginning."

"I'm sure Madge told me to-morrow at eight," said little Kate.

"Well," laughed Alice, her serenity entirely restored by the soothing liniment, "I guess this is the first time such a thing ever happened in this town, that everybody didn't know the exact hour a party was to come off. I wouldn't miss it for anything, would you, girls?"

"I'd like to go, very much," agreed Georgiana, who loved dressing up and going to parties, and who had been looking forward to the next evening with secret impatience. She had been in Glendale only two days, and so far had met very few of her cousins' friends.

“Well, you’d all better dress right away, then, for you are expected promptly at eight. Georgiana dear, may I talk to you for a few minutes in my room?”

Georgiana was surprised; what could her aunt want with her? She followed in some perplexity.

“Georgiana dear,” began Mrs. Harding gravely, “I had a letter from your mother this afternoon.”

“And was there one for me?”

“Yes, here it is. You may read it in a few minutes.”

“Thank you, Aunt Kate. And how is Rosalie?”

“That is what I wanted to speak to you about, dear. The doctor has confirmed your mother’s fears. Rosalie really has scarlet fever.”

“Is she very ill?” asked Georgiana, to whom illness had meant until now merely a sniffley cold and the joy of staying home from school.

“They hope not. Your mother is to let me know every day or two. But it is an uncertain disease, you know, and requires careful nursing. You understand that it is very slow?”

“Is it? And is it catching all the time?”

“Yes, it is, dear. More catching at the end than at the beginning. And at the very best it takes six weeks to get over it.”

“Six weeks! And shall I have to stay away from home all that time?”

“I am afraid so. Are you very homesick, dear?”

“Oh, no, not a bit, Aunt Kate. I think visiting is lots of fun. Only I’m afraid you’ll get awfully tired of having me here—and we were to have gone to the seashore for August, you know.”

“I fear that will have to be given up this year. Even if your mother should wish to go away after Rosalie has recovered, it would be only to take her somewhere, by herself, for a change of air. Or possibly your mother may have to go alone. She is staying in the room with Rosalie, you know—or will know, after you have read your letter. She is to help with the nursing, and this is the last letter you will get from her, herself, for a good many weeks, my dear. Of course your father will write regularly.”

Georgiana felt a sudden qualm of home-

sickness. It changed the whole situation, somehow, to think of her mother shut up in quarantine, not allowed even to write to her oldest daughter. It seemed to be giving Rosalie so much the better of things, somehow. But the sensation was only a passing twinge. Georgiana was of too even a temperament to grieve over what could not be helped. And she guessed shrewdly that she would be made much of here in her aunt's household, to comfort her for the exile from her family circle. So she answered calmly:

"Father is a dreadful correspondent, as of course you know, Aunt Kate, and I don't suppose we'll know much about Rosalie till she's well. Will she have to stay in bed all those six weeks?"

"For three or four weeks, at least, I am afraid, unless her case is exceptionally light. And you must promise me, Georgiana darling, that you will come to me whenever you feel the least bit homesick or blue, and we'll have comfortable, cheer-up talks together."

As she spoke, she bent to kiss her niece tenderly, for Mrs. Harding's heart was full of anxiety and foreboding. But Georgiana re-

ceived the caress with dutiful submission; she felt no uneasiness.

“Thank you, Aunt Kate. And would you mind telling me which dress you think I’d better put on for the party to-night?”

“That is another thing I meant to speak about. If you don’t feel like going to the party just after hearing about Rosalie’s illness—you need not feel in the least obliged to go. The girls can take your excuses and you and I can have a quiet, cozy evening at home.”

Georgiana looked up inquiringly. Secretly, she was aghast at the notion of missing the party, but she realized that her Aunt Kate might have a different point of view.

“Is—do you think I ought not to go, Aunt Kate?” she asked. “Do you think Rosalie is so—so very sick?” And her voice trembled a bit.

“Oh, no, no,” answered Mrs. Harding quickly, fearing that she had done exactly the thing she had tried so hard not to do. “They are not worried about Rosalie at all; certainly not yet, dear. I only thought that perhaps you might be feeling a little—little blue, and not in the mood for a party.”

Georgiana considered.

"Don't you think the party might help to cheer me up?" she suggested diplomatically. "If Rosalie isn't very sick, there isn't any use in imagining she is, is there? I'm awfully sorry for her, but I can't do her any good by sitting around in the dumps and worrying you, Aunt Kate. Mother said I wasn't to be any bother to you, at all," she added virtuously, "and if I am with Alice and little Kate at the party, why, I'll be off your mind, you see—and I won't be cooking up all sorts of scares about Rosalie."

Mrs. Harding admitted her niece's wisdom and sent her off to dress, but secretly she was a little disappointed.

"How silly and unreasonable of me to feel resentful because Georgiana did not go into hysterics when I gave her the news, after I had spent an hour planning the gentlest way of breaking it to her. Of course she does not realize the seriousness of the situation. I very carefully prevented her from seeing it. After all, she is only a child, and a very wise one to make the best of matters."

As a matter of fact, Georgiana went off with

a light heart. It was exciting to be going out to an evening party, prettily dressed, and with the prospect of meeting a good many new people and deciding whether or not she was going to like them. She wondered if the mysterious Jinks would be at the party, and asked her cousins, as they walked down the street in the late twilight.

“Of course; she’s everywhere,” little Kate replied. “And here we are; that white house at the corner. I hope you’ll like Madge Elwell, Georgiana. She’s one of our best friends.”

“It is going to be a Salmagundi party,” Madge announced joyfully, meeting them at the gate and ushering them up the flower-bordered path. “You are the first to get here, and I’m so glad, because Georgiana must be sure to know everybody before the games begin.”

“Isn’t Jinks here?” asked Kate. “I want to thank her again for saving my life.”

“‘Saving your life’! Why, Kate Harding, how terribly exciting!” called a gay voice from the road, and a small crowd of young people, boys and girls, came laughing and talking up the path.

Kate related the afternoon's adventure to a rapidly increasing and duly appreciative audience, and by the time she had finished, almost the entire party had assembled.

"What a pity Jinks isn't here to hear her praises sung," one of the guests observed. "Didn't she get your invitation in time, Madge?"

"Why, yes, she's surely coming," answered Madge, glancing anxiously up the road. "Annie took a note up this afternoon, because their telephone's out of order, and Miss Farnham said she might come."

"It's queer; Jinks is generally first at a party."

"Perhaps she thinks it's to-morrow night, like we did," observed Alice with serene disregard for parts of speech. "Why don't you call her up, Madge?"

"I can't. Their telephone's been disconnected. We really ought to begin," sighed Madge.

"Never mind, she'll turn up," said little Kate with implicit faith. "Let's start the games if you're ready, Madge. You know how early Mother always sends for us."

They went indoors and Georgiana, between polite conversations with the many new acquaintances who greeted her, some heartily, some shyly, but all cordially, as the Harding girls' out-of-town cousin, found time to speculate anew upon the identity of the absent Jinks. What an absurd name it was, and yet how every one took it as a matter of course!

It was nearly two hours later that the subject of her speculations arrived, and it must be confessed that her appearance left much still to be accounted for in Georgiana's mind.

The games were over, the prizes had been awarded, and Mrs. Elwell had assembled the guests in the dining-room for the home-made ice-cream and cake that always crowned the village parties. Suddenly some one laughed and exclaimed:

"Here she is, now. Why, Jinks, whatever in the world have you got on?"

Everybody crowded into the hall, Georgiana peering curiously over the shoulders of those in front of her. In the open doorway stood a queer figure, clad in the black mohair costume of a waitress, minus the white collar, cuffs and

apron. Over the frock was thrown a satin wrap of the most vivid scarlet, while the wearer's tousled red head was covered by a dainty boudoir cap of pale chiffon and lace, as palpably a borrowed garment as the rest of the eccentric toilette.

The final effect of this grotesque costume was one of distinct dampness. For, unheeded by the young people, intent upon their games, the character of the summer night had changed. There was no dramatic thunder-storm, but the dark, star-bespangled sky had gradually faded behind an equally dark, star-quenching mist, and down was falling of those

“ . . . maiden showers
Which . . . do strew
A baptism o'er the flowers,”

as was shown by the ugly black spots upon the brilliant scarlet satin, suggesting permanent damage to the lovely garment.

“ I know it's not a fancy dress ball, Madge, but I had to come this way or not at all,” Jinks apologized, removing the boudoir cap—a limp ruin—and shaking her hair very much as a dog shakes his fur. “ My own clothes were—

ahem—locked up, and the key out of my reach, so—I just made the best of it with what I could find,” she finished with a shrug. “Have you had the ice-cream? I’m simply starving. Madge, will your mother let me come in like this? It really and truly isn’t my fault,” and amid shrieks of laughter Jinks was escorted to the dining-room.

Georgiana was more puzzled than ever as to the identity and character of this peculiar girl with the odd nickname. She thought she was given a clue when she overheard Mrs. Elwell say to her husband:

“Of course she took those clothes and has run away. I suppose we ought to send her straight home, but now that she’s here, do let her have her fun out, poor child.”

Whereupon Georgiana concluded that Jinks was the daughter of some poor but worthy neighbor with whom the children were allowed to associate through kindness.

CHAPTER III

BURGLARS

WHILE Georgiana, puzzling over her cousins' odd playmate, was walking with Alice and Kate back to the house from the disastrous tea party, the subject of her curiosity strolled listlessly across the lawn to her own home. And, oddly enough, she was thinking of Georgiana. She was thinking of Georgiana's tidy, glossy hair, her immaculate white frock, dainty silk stockings and clean white shoes.

"She's nothing but a prig, and I know I'm going to hate her," reflected Jinks vehemently. "I hope she isn't going to stay long. She carried a parasol, too!" And though she tried to make herself believe that this was quite the height of feminine folly, Jinks stopped suddenly and stared down ruefully at her own stained, torn frock, rough and crumpled where the kettle had splashed it.

"I wonder if girls do have to keep always

fussed up and neat," she asked herself. "If it is only boys who have the right to be dirty and jolly and comfortable? Would wearing pinchy, pointed shoes and blue hair ribbons make me a better girl, I wonder? Miss Farnham keeps saying so, but she's a prig, too, and who would believe her? Mother always wants me all dolled up whenever *she* sees me. It seems such a waste of time. I wonder what that Georgie girl thinks about and does? No, I can never call her 'George.' It doesn't—doesn't fit. Does she care to do good in the world, as I do? Jiminy, I wish I knew."

Jinks was thinking so deeply that she reached the house without realizing. She had planned to make her entrance by the back way, to save her governess a shock and herself an argument.

But a shrill cry of dismay roused her as she stepped on the terrace and Miss Farnham, herself immaculately dressed, stood before her with uplifted hands.

"Oh, Virginia! *How* did you manage to get into such a shocking condition in half an hour?"

"Easily," retorted Jinks pertly. The use

of her full name always irritated her. "Just by climbing a tree and then by sliding down it to save little Kate's life."

"You don't mean it! What happened?"

"She caught herself on fire from the alcohol stove. I did mean to sneak up the back stairs and change before you saw me," added Jinks politely.

"But you can't change," sighed Miss Farnham helplessly. "That is the last clean frock you have, and the trunks won't come till morning."

"But I've got plenty of things in my own room."

"You forget that your room is locked off."

"Isn't there a key?"

"The workmen have bolted the door on the inside to make sure no one goes in until the paint is dry. And you are wet, as well!" she ejaculated as Jinks shivered.

The child grinned.

"I guess I'll have to have my dinner upstairs, won't I? I know you won't let me come to the table in a kimono," she said virtuously.

Jinks was delighted at the prospect of a cozy

dinner in her room, where she could curl up on the couch and read while she ate. She knew that Gussie would bring up not only her favorite dinner dishes, but some special goodies as well.

Miss Farnham agreed to the arrangement, as she agreed to almost everything Jinks suggested. Jinks had a way of settling details to suit her own tastes in a manner that left Miss Farnham with the impression that she herself had suggested the arrangement. Miss Farnham did not fancy a lonely dinner in the huge dining-room, nor a solitary evening afterward, but under the circumstances there seemed nothing else to do.

Jinks was already cozily settled on the couch in the room that she was occupying during the repainting and repapering of her own, when Miss Farnham bethought herself of a belated message and panted hurriedly up-stairs.

"Virginia," she exclaimed, pausing on the threshold to regain breath, "whatever will you do about Madge Elwell's party? You haven't a thing to wear."

"I shall have when the trunks come; or Mrs. Blake can iron up something in a hurry."

"But the party is to-night."

"Oh, no, it's to-morrow."

"But it isn't; that is just the point. Mrs. Elwell saw us driving up from the station and sent her maid over to tell you."

"Why didn't she telephone?" Jinks would leave the main point of an argument any day, to settle her curiosity on some minor oddity.

"It seems the telephone isn't working. Ford tells me the men are putting in new instruments or something while your mother is away. It won't be finished until to-morrow."

"But I'm sure the party is to-morrow," argued Jinks. "Alice and little Kate both think so, too, and we couldn't all be wrong. You must have misunderstood the message."

Miss Farnham was quite sure she had not misunderstood, but when Jinks spoke in that tone she was hard to convince. Moreover, as the child really had nothing to wear, and could not possibly attend the party, what could be accomplished by winning her point as to the date?

"Well, I'm sorry you have to miss the party," she said helplessly, and went downstairs again.

Jinks grinned into her book.

"How the dear old stupid loves to have the last word," she thought and became absorbed in "Scottish Chiefs."

Gussie came in presently to prepare the room for the night, and stared sorrowfully at the wreck of a frock.

"My word, Miss Jinks, you have made a mess of it! No wonder Miss Farnham's a bit put out. I'm afraid Mrs. Blake'll be, too—the wash is so big."

"There is a history attached to that dress, Gussie," replied Jinks in a dramatic tone. "If Mrs. Blake complains, tell her it was done putting out a fire!"

"Putting out a fire! My word, where?"

With great gusto Jinks described the afternoon's experience, and it may be taken for granted that the awe and admiration of her one auditor did not lessen her power of description, nor decrease the size of the flames "that enwreathed their victim" as she, the rescuer, appeared on the scene in true fireman's pole fashion.

"My word! That was a grand thing to do, Miss Jinks. You sure have a cool head, al-

ways knowin' just what to do at a pinch. What'll you have for your dinner?"

"What is there?" asked Jinks with animation, and put aside her book to discuss practical affairs.

Gussie carried the soiled frock and its history to the laundry, and reappeared in due time with a tempting and generously set tray.

The official hour for dinner in the Babcock household was half-past seven. The cook generally hurried it forward a bit when the master and mistress were absent, to suit her own convenience. But this evening various delays had occurred to make it later even than the customary hour.

"The roast didn't come," explained Gussie, when Jinks expressed hungry impatience. "Ford had to send the stable boy down to the village for it just as Mr. Hebener was closing up. Mr. Hebener knew your Pa and Ma were comin' to-morrow, and he thought the roast was ordered for them, he said."

"I suppose he thought Miss Farnham and I would live on cereal in the meantime," observed Jinks sarcastically. "Well, it looks like a

good dinner, now it's come. What's for dessert? And that reminds me. I brought you back a box of candy, Gussie. It's in my top drawer."

Gussie, greatly pleased by this mark of favor, opened the box, admired, and offered it. Soon mistress and maid were chattering intimately over the box of chocolates.

"It's too bad you've to miss the party," Gussie observed presently. "Mrs. Elwell does give nice parties, her Annie tells me."

Jinks began to feel puzzled.

"That's what Miss Farnham said. I mean that she's sorry I'm missing it. What makes you both think the party is to-night?"

"Why, Annie brought the note, while you were out, and as there was an answer, Miss Farnham opened it. Ford asked Annie if the party wasn't to-morrow, and she said no, that was a mistake. She said as Mrs. Elwell didn't understand why so many people thought it was to-morrow. Miss Farnham sent back word you might go."

"Yes, and I've got to go, Gussie, 'cause I promised Madge. I wrote her a letter from St. George-by-the-Sea, saying I'd surely be

back in time for her party, and I always keep my promises."

"But what'll you wear? And it's so late! The party began at eight."

Jinks glanced at the clock. It was nearly half-past eight.

"I don't know what I'll do. Let me think. You trot along and bring up my dessert."

Jinks pondered the situation and was ready with a plan when the loyal Gussie reappeared.

"Miss Farnham's such a stickler for party clothes at a party, that I think I won't worry her about to-night, Gussie," she observed diplomatically. "I've decided to pretend it is a masquerade and go in a costume. That new black dress Mother got for you will do nicely, with that red satin cape of Mother's that's hanging in the hall closet. There's no hurry about my starting, as I'm too late for the games, so I'll just wait till Miss Farnham comes up to say good-night, and then go. I'll get there in time for the ice-cream, and it will be a great lark."

"But won't Miss Farnham see you going out? And it isn't a masquerade. All the

other girls'll have on white dresses and sashes."

"Don't you begin preaching, Gussie. I know a way out, and I'm not going to have my fun spoiled. Besides, I've got to keep my promise to Madge Elwell. All I ask of you is to bring me the dress and keep mum."

As Jinks had expected, Miss Farnham came up after dinner, and, with two or three enquiries as to whether she had caught a chill, advised her charge to go early to bed. Jinks responded by yawning widely and murmuring "um-um," and Miss Farnham withdrew to the library and a new novel.

The regular governess was supposed to use the schoolroom, a large, cheerful, comfortably furnished room at the back of the second floor, as a sitting-room during her spare hours. But Miss Farnham was not the regular governess. She was, in fact, a distant cousin of Mrs. Babcock, who filled in whenever a governess was lacking—which was rather often.

Among her friends, Miss Farnham posed as a martyr to her cousin's needs, but in reality she enjoyed the weeks of luxurious living, and

wondered why teachers found Jinks so hard to manage. Like most weak natures, Miss Farnham was inordinately vain. Jinks discovered this weakness at an early age, and by skillful handling, made Miss Farnham believe herself in high command, while in reality the child had her wound round her finger.

But at times Jinks presumed too far, as we shall see.

Miss Farnham, then, as a member of the family, felt herself privileged to sit downstairs. Secretly she would have preferred the coziness of the schoolroom, but considered it necessary to keep up her dignity before the servants. She was not equal to the vast grandeur of the drawing-room, which at the best of times required a crowd to make it habitable, but took her book to the brightly lighted library, where she was soon lost in her story. Not, however, without an occasional pause to listen for imaginary sounds, for Miss Farnham was of a nervous temperament and the big house was lonely.

And at length she heard a real sound; a sound so faint and gentle as to make it alarming. She dropped her book and sat listening,

breathless with vague terror. The sound came again; the sound of rustling vines!

For a moment she sat rigid, petrified with fear. She was positive that a hideous face was peering in at her through the window. With an effort she forced herself to turn and look over her shoulder. The window shades were lowered. Still, the noise had to be accounted for; she was sure she had not been mistaken. Perhaps some one was prowling about the place in search of an entrance. She had better send Ford out to investigate. After a further moment of hesitation she rang the bell.

A new thought assailed her. She remembered the broad white pillars, vine wreathed, that supported the portico. The sound she had heard might have been made by some one moving those vines. How easy it would be for an agile person to climb one of the pillars, enter an up-stairs window and conceal himself until the household was asleep. The very idea was enough to picture the whole episode as an accomplished fact in Miss Farnham's easily agitated mind. She pressed the bell again, frantically.

Where was everybody? Why did nobody

come? It offered a temporary comfort to remember that the room directly over the portico—Jinks's room—was locked off, but the situation was serious enough.

Ford hastened into the room. Gussie, supposing Miss Farnham had discovered Jinks's absence, delayed the butler long enough to caution him not to betray the manner of her exit. He was entirely unprepared for Miss Farnham's dramatic announcement.

"Ford, there are burglars in the house. I distinctly heard one climb the pillar outside this window. Telephone for the police."

"But Madam forgets the telephone is not working," replied Ford helplessly, to gain time to think. "How many are there, and where?"

"I think they are in Miss Virginia's room. No, come back. You forget the painters have locked her room, and if the burglar entered that window he is caught in a trap, so to speak. Do you think you and Overton could—ah—try to capture him?"

"We could try, ma'am, but what could we do with him?"

"Lock him up, naturally, until the police

can be brought. Go and call Overton. No, on the other hand, suppose you wait here. I—I am a bit nervous. The man might get out and try to come down-stairs. I'll ask Gussie to call Overton."

She rang the bell again and Gussie came promptly, fearing a scolding for allowing Jinks to go masquerading, but curious withal. Her composure when she heard of the suspected burglar astonished Miss Farnham. But of course Gussie knew what the sound had been. She could not explain, however, without breaking her promise of secrecy to Jinks, and she thought a form of search might as well be gone through. As she turned to leave the room she winked at Ford.

"Have you—a—by any possible chance a—a revolver, Ford?" asked Miss Farnham timidly. "Burglars are sometimes desperate characters."

"No, ma'am. None of us is allowed to have firearms about, for fear of Miss Jinks finding them."

"It is very wrong to leave the house undefended. Miss Jinks should be forbidden to touch them."

“That would make it all the worse—asking your pardon, ma’am.”

“Yes, we won’t discuss Miss Ji—Miss Virginia’s character, Ford.” Miss Farnham thought it more dignified to speak of Jinks to the servants by her full name, though she did not always remember in time. “Tell me, how do you and Overton propose to go about capturing this burglar?”

The suggestive word made her flesh creep anew, and she peeped apprehensively into the hall. Overton was very long in coming, she thought. What if he should not be on the place?

As it happened, Overton was in the kitchen, paying a visit to the cook, but as the cook was of a flighty, easily excited nature, it took Gussie some time to explain the state of affairs to Overton without needless alarm, and yet without betraying Jinks. He appeared in the library at length, cap in hand.

“Oh, Overton,” exclaimed Miss Farnham, almost in tears by this time, “did Gussie tell you what is the matter? Are you and Ford afraid to go up-stairs? You know the man may be armed.”

“We’ll risk it, ma’am. How many rooms open on to the upper porch?” Overton was not above a human willingness to prolong Miss Farnham’s anxiety. He bore a constant grudge against her for continuing to call him coachman when he had long since been promoted to the office of chauffeur.

“Oh!” screamed Miss Farnham, growing even paler. “I forgot that other rooms had windows opening on the portico! Mrs. Babcock’s room!”

“We’ll search that first, ma’am. The chances are if he got into Miss Jinks’s room and found it locked, he like as not climbed out again and into the next window.”

“Oh, Overton, it is really dreadful!” moaned Miss Farnham. “Do you—do you think it safe to go up without being armed?”

With a wink over his shoulder at Ford, Overton took a heavy walking-stick from the rack and said:

“Now I am ready for anything. Come along, Ford.” And the two men tramped solemnly up the stairs.

Miss Farnham, clinging timidly to Gussie, remained at the foot of the stairs. Overton,

who was enjoying himself very much, was quite aware of her anxiety and conversed in clear tones about the possible whereabouts of the burglar.

“ I don’t think he could have squeezed down the clothes chute, do you? ” she heard him say, and shuddered.

Suddenly another awful thought convulsed her.

“ Gussie, Jinks is up there! Suppose the burglar has—has—gone into that room! ”

“ Not likely, ma’am. They generally avoids rooms where people are. Not but what Miss Jinks would be equal to turnin’ him out if he should go in,” she added with pride.

“ But some one ought to see if she’s all right.”

“ It’s all quiet, ma’am. Don’t you think—if she should be sleepin’—it’s a pity to disturb her? ”

“ But he may have chloroformed her.”

“ Then I’ll go see, myself,” answered Gussie, with what Miss Farnham thought was quite amazing courage, and started up the staircase.

It happened that Jansen, the gardener, had

come into the kitchen upon the heels of Overton's departure, and to him the cook confided.

"That goose of a Gussie was here just now to fetch Overton to hunt for burglars," she said in great agitation. "Gussie tried to make out there wasn't nothin' to the excitement but Miss Farnham's nerves, but I'm thinkin' it's serious. We wouldn't want the house robbed, with the master and madam away, Jansen. Do you go and call James, and search the garden. There's a fearful lot of shrubbery around the place, and I'll not sleep till I know."

So Jansen departed on his share of the search, and encountered the party returning in a body from Mrs. Elwell's. The increasing rain had broken up festivities earlier than was expected and Jinks felt cheated out of her share of the party. She never minded rain and could not see why any one else should.

When Jansen and the under gardener, beating bushes at the end of the lawn, saw the young people coming and told their business, there was immediate excitement, and the boys and girls, forgetful of party clothes, joined

gleefully in the hunt. Jinks was foremost in the hue and cry until suddenly she recollected that Miss Farnham believed her to be safe in bed.

Obedying an impulse of discretion she rushed across the lawn and into the house by the back door. Her plan was to gain her bedroom, exchange her successful costume for a kimono and then descend as if just disturbed by the excitement.

The cook, left alone and unprotected in her kitchen, had by this time become reduced to such a state of nerves that the drip of a leaky spigot seemed like a series of pistol shots. Suddenly, across the span of her apprehensive vision, shot a black figure, with a stream of scarlet about it. The gleam flashed past the kitchen door, along the passage, but instead of following it to investigate, the cook rushed out into the night with a shriek of fresh alarm.

“Help, help! The burglars are carrying torches! They’ll have us a-fire!”

Gussie had only just turned the bend in the staircase when she gave a scream which curdled the blood in Miss Farnham’s veins.

What had happened? Her lips were too parched to scream. She could only whisper hoarsely:

“What is it?”

But her acute ears caught sounds that gradually turned her fears to righteous indignation. Gussie's voice was heard, an interval after the scream, to ejaculate in an astonished undertone:

“Why, Miss Jinks, how did you ever get back so soon? I ——”

“Shshsh!” came in a sharp sibilant from Jinks, who added immediately in clear, sweet tones: “I've just come down to see what all the fuss is about, and to help hunt for that burglar.”

Miss Farnham turned and stalked, as majestically as her plump figure would allow, into the library. Jinks knew, from the very look of her back as she ran after her down the stairs, that Miss Farnham knew. But she tried to carry it off.

“Overton and Ford say everything's serene up-stairs, and not to worry,” she remarked with an innocent manner. “Were you badly scared?”

Miss Farnham collapsed, sobbing, into a chair.

"You did it to frighten me! How could you have been so cruel?" she moaned.

Jinks stared, half penitent, half indignant.

"I didn't do anything of the sort. I never thought of scaring you, and I'm awfully sorry," she protested.

Miss Farnham was too upset to listen to reason.

"Your father and mother are coming tomorrow, and I shall tell them that I cannot be responsible for such a dreadful child," she cried hysterically.

"But I didn't," repeated Jinks helplessly. "I ——"

A loud commotion outside, followed by Ford's abrupt opening of the front door, interrupted her. She and Miss Farnham rushed out in time to see the entire village fire department—which consisted of a single, man-powered hose cart—drawn up before the front door. Energetic hands had already pumped the tank full, others unreeled the hose, and Mrs. Babcock's new mural decorations narrowly escaped eclipse.

This was the last straw, and Miss Farnham went to bed in a real attack of hysterics, which kept Gussie busy and cross for nearly an hour. Gussie did not like Miss Farnham, and was exasperated to have to wait on her. And she was nearly vexed with Jinks for being the cause, however unintentionally, of that need.

Jinks, subdued and completely penitent, stopped Gussie on her way through the hall with a hot-water bottle.

"Is Miss Farnham very ill?" she asked anxiously.

"Bless you no, child, just an attack of nerves," answered Gussie irritably. "Do go to bed like a good child."

"I don't see what's wrong with me, anyhow, Gussie," mourned Jinks. "I can't even go to a party without getting into trouble."

"Perhaps it was the way you went," commented Gussie severely. "Didn't I tell you that wasn't any way to go to a party—sliding down a pillar like that!"

CHAPTER IV

CONSEQUENCES

STARTING an alarm is very much like throwing a big stone into a pond. The agitation spreads in rapidly increasing circles.

Gussie's message to Overton carried farther than either she or Miss Farnham intended, thanks to the cook's inclination to make the worst of everything.

It was bad enough to have the children of the neighborhood, in silk stockings and thin shoes, rushing hither and thither among damp bushes and long grass, catching cold and getting overexcited. The young people were never abroad at that hour except to walk in decorous groups from one house to another, chaperoned by maids or big brothers, and they made the most of the general confusion to have a glorious romp, with the consequence that the village doctor spent a busy morning, next day, prescribing for sore throats and sniffles.

Madge Elwell and Jinks were the only ones who had missed the frolic, and it had not occurred to any one that Jinks, the ringleader, was absent. Each group took it for granted she was with some other crowd.

But still worse results followed, rumors of which reached the Babcock kitchen next morning, and made Gussie very uneasy over keeping her promise of secrecy to Jinks.

On the outskirts of the village lived a forlorn family who bore the burden, not only of poverty and sickness, but the stigma of a jail sentence. Job Stebbins had tried to live honestly and deserved better of fate. During a period of ill luck, and out of a job, he fell in with evil companions and had been caught with a gang that was trying to break open the post-office safe. Job had served his sentence without complaint, while his wife kept herself and her children alive, somehow, and he had come out of prison resolved to lead a new and strictly honest life.

He quickly felt the weight of the stone he had tied around his own neck, and found that he had stored up scarcely enough courage to face the handicap of life. But his wife ful-

filled faithfully her woman's mission of standing by him, and together they wrested a meagre existence out of their tiny farm. Stebbins was never in steady work. If anything went wrong at the place of his employment, it was Stebbins who suffered first suspicion, and the fact that he was never proved guilty failed to lighten the cloud of distrust under which he was forced to live.

It happened that on the night in question, Stebbins had gone out without telling his wife where he was going. The fact was that he had heard of a mill needing a night watchman, and meant to apply for the job. He was afraid that his wife would consider the idea of his applying for a position of trust as absurd, so he kept his ambition to himself.

The owner of the mill in question happened to be Mr. Babcock, at that time out of town. So was the superintendent, the man servant at the latter's home bluntly informed Stebbins, at the same time closing the door sharply in his face. Stebbins was aware that he opened it immediately after, to see the unwelcome visitor well off the premises.

Stebbins next applied at the overseer's

house, next the mill, but the overseer ordered him away unceremoniously, and Stebbins was returning home, downcast and bitter, when he encountered a disorderly crowd of men and boys in the lane leading from his own cottage.

After the shrubberies of the large Babcock estate had been whipped up, and the neighboring bushes explored for the rumored burglar, the rapidly growing band of helpers, summoned by the rumor of excitement, gathered to parley. Their blood was up, and a burglar they were determined to have, if one could be found. Only the rougher element of the town was left in the hunt by now, and the discomfort of the rain, which had settled into a steady downpour, only whetted their appetite for justice.

“Where’s Job Stebbins?” some one shouted. “If he was an honest man and a good citizen he’d be here now helpin’ us.”

The insinuation of these words took instant effect and a voice in the crowd responded:

“Let’s go ask him why he ain’t with us—if he’s at home?”

They rushed clamorously to Job’s shanty. Mrs. Stebbins, alarmed by her husband’s ab-

sence and the rumors that had floated in, refused to open the door, and, meaning to help Job's cause, and give him a chance to prove an alibi in case of need, declared him to be sick in bed and on no account to be disturbed.

The crowd, grumbling and unconvinced, at length departed, only to meet the unlucky Job skulking—as their heated fancy described—in the shadow of a hedge at the bend of the lane. Seizing him, the crowd bore Job triumphantly before the sheriff, who listened as doubtingly as any to Job's reasons for being away from home at that hour. In some uncertainty, but not knowing what else to do, the sheriff locked up Job for the night.

In the meantime Jinks went to bed, in a state of less remorse than her prank deserved, and slept the sleep of all healthy young animals. By morning her adventure was almost forgotten, and Miss Farnham's anger against her entirely so. She came down to breakfast serenely prepared to break the bread of peace and forgiveness.

Not so Miss Farnham. She had been made to appear ridiculous, whether intentionally or not, and that was an unforgivable offense.

She made up her mind to remain in her own room, in a state of offended dignity, until Mrs. Babcock got home and pronounced judgment upon Jinks.

“Good-mor—why, where is she?” demanded Jinks in astonishment, stopping in the doorway to survey an empty dining-room.

Ford stepped out of the pantry.

“Shall I serve breakfast, Miss?” he asked blandly.

“I guess we’d better wait for Miss Farnham; first time I ever knew her to be late for a meal.”

“Ahem. Miss Farnham is breakfasting in her own room.”

“Oh, is she? That’s bully! Another nervous headache, I suppose. Bring on the provender, Ford. I hope there’s something good. I got hardly any of the party last night. Every one rushed home so because it started to rain.”

Jinks’s contentment was short-lived. Ford said nothing, but his manner was coldly severe enough to freeze the most ardent enthusiasm. Jinks joked and fidgeted, pretending not to notice his attitude for as long as she could

stand the strain, then she demanded irritably:

"What is it, Ford? What's happened? Miss Farnham isn't really ill, is she?" she asked as the butler shook his head solemnly.

"Not ill, Miss, only—well, low in her mind, I believe."

Jinks grinned, but the servant did not respond. He shook his head again, thoughtfully.

"She — I'm given to understand she's packin' up," he explained briefly.

"You mean she's going away!"

"Leastways, preparin' to."

"Whatever for?"

"I should think you could answer that better'n me, Miss," he answered, the long-suppressed smile making a faint showing.

"Because I went to the party last night? There wasn't any reason why I shouldn't go—except clothes."

"It was partly your goin' without leave, but mostly, I guess, the *way* you went."

"Why, that's just what Gussie said! I'd have gone out the front door if I had thought Miss Farnham would let me."

“It was the effect it had on her nerves, Miss, that she can’t forgive. Female nerves is sacred things, and not—ahem—to be made fun of.”

“I never made fun of her nerves!”

“You scared her, Miss. Laws, how you scared her! And you put the laugh on her, and that, if you’ll excuse my sayin’ so, is goin’ past the limit.”

Jinks groaned.

“I didn’t mean to. I was really trying to save her feelings, Ford.”

“She doesn’t see it that way.”

“She surely can’t think I slid down the portico pillar just to scare her. Please bring me some hot toast and marmalade.”

In spite of her dismay, Jinks managed to make a very good breakfast. When she had finished she went into the library and sat down to write out her spelling, resolved to go about the day’s work as if everything were as usual. When quarter past nine came and Miss Farnham had not appeared for lessons, Jinks decided that she might look upon the morning as a holiday, and departed in search of amusement.

Although up-stairs the painters were talking and whistling at their work, the house seemed strangely empty and cheerless. The cook was cross and would not let her make candy, and Gussie avoided her. The truth was that Gussie knew, more than any one in the house, how very extensive had been the results of Jinks's escapade, and her conscience told her that she was a good deal to blame, in allowing the masquerade.

An hour passed and Miss Farnham made no sign. Jinks began to feel that even Miss Farnham's nagging would be more desirable than this uncanny silence. She tried in turn all the annoying tricks that usually brought forth vigorous protest. She whistled in the halls, she banged popular airs on the piano instead of practicing, and finally slid down the banisters with a shout and a bang at the bottom. The quiet was ominous. In a final effort to attract attention, she bounced her tennis ball against the wall of the house near Miss Farnham's window, but succeeded only in breaking a pane of glass and making a smudge on the fresh wall paper.

In disgust, Jinks strolled down to the lilac

bushes in search of little Kate and sympathy. She had to "yodel" several times before she received any response, and then only Alice appeared, looking mournful and subdued. Jinks, who had been waiting impatiently to pour her troubles into little Kate's sympathetic ears, stared in dismay.

"What's the matter? You haven't had bad news about your sick cousin, have you?" she asked.

"No, oh no, but little Kate and Georgiana are both laid up with colds, and Mother says it comes from chasing the burglar last night, and that you ——"

"Chasing what? Was there really a burglar after all? Have I missed some excitement?"

"Are you trying to make fun of me, Virginia Babcock?" demanded Alice.

"Trying to make fun of you, Alice? Of course not! Why does everybody pick on me this morning, I'd like to know."

"But you surely haven't forgotten our meeting Jansen on the way home from the party, and helping hunt for the burglar? Where did you go? We couldn't find you anywhere."

Slowly the facts dawned upon Jinks's mind. Every one believed there really had been a burglar!

"Oh, dear," she exclaimed, "there wasn't any burglar, Alice, except me. Miss Farnham heard me sliding down the pillar when I sneaked out for the party, and spread the alarm. I do think Gussie might have headed it off, for she knew it was me."

"'I,'" corrected Alice, from force of habit. "Then why didn't you tell us all so?" she added with pardonable resentment.

"I—I didn't have time. I wanted to get home and into bed before Miss Farnham found I was missing. You see, I went to the party without Miss Farnham's knowing, because she'd have objected to my get-up. I thought people would soon see it was a false alarm. Oh, dear, what a selfish thing I am, Alice. Does your mother mind very much?"

"Well, she doesn't enjoy having the girls sick, and Georgiana being a visitor makes the responsibility greater."

"May I come up to the house and explain?"

Alice hesitated. She knew her mother was really vexed with Jinks, for Gussie had been

unable to keep the facts to herself, and a pretty accurate version of last night's adventure had found its way from the Harding kitchen into the parlor.

"Have you really anything to explain?" she asked doubtfully.

"Of course I have. You don't suppose I did it on purpose, do you? I mean making people think I was a burglar."

"N—no-o, I don't suppose you did. But ——"

"Oh, come along," interrupted Jinks, who had a natural aversion to the word "but."
"Oh, dear, I wish I had washed my hands and put on a clean dress."

Alice laughed, for, to the best of her recollection, Jinks had made that speech every time she expected to see Mrs. Harding.

"You ought to live with us for a while, Jinks," she observed as they walked up the path together; "perhaps you'd get into the habit of clean hands and the rest."

"I wish I could," Jinks agreed longingly, "or with somebody that loved and understood me. Not that your mother does, but I'd have little Kate to speak up for me."

“Why, Mother does love you. We all do,” declared Alice; but Jinks shook her head.

“I know,” she said sagely. “Your mother’s private opinion of me is—well, not a bit flattering. But never mind. I’m trying to change it, I honestly am, and some day, Alice, when I’m a celebrated philanthropist like Jane Addams, you’ll be proud you know me.”

Mrs. Harding’s reception of Jinks was distinctly chilly. Jinks sighed and blinked savagely to keep back the tears. Why was her life one long-drawn-out apology when she meant so well? Her ideal, which in fancy she was always striving to follow, was of a charming, gracious young Lady Bountiful. Yet did others find her so? She had once heard herself described as “a vicious little hoyden,” as a result of one of her misunderstood acts of charity, and the words had sunk deep into her proud, sensitive nature. She entertained a secret passion for Mrs. Harding and conscious that her admiration was not returned, always felt doubly awkward in the presence of her divinity. So she hung her head as she stood before Mrs. Harding, and looked the picture of guilty remorse.

"Please, Mrs. Harding, it was all a mistake," she began eagerly. "I had promised Madge that I'd surely go to her party, and I've never broken a promise yet, have I, girls? I had to go. But I didn't have any party clothes clean, so I dressed up and slid down the pillar for a lark. I never thought about Miss Farnham being scared.

"I was at the party only five or ten minutes because of the rain, and only had time to eat half a plate of ice-cream. On the way home we met our gardener and a crowd of village boys. They said something about burglars, and from what they said I guessed Miss Farnham had heard me sliding down the pillar and got frightened. Without thinking of anything else, I skipped home as fast as I could, so Miss Farnham wouldn't catch me. I only thought it a big joke when the fire company came. Honestly and truly, I never knew any one took it seriously, Mrs. Harding, and I'm awfully sorry the girls have caught cold. Is it serious, do you think?"

The girls burst out laughing at this, and Mrs. Harding was compelled to join them.

Relieved and instantly at her ease, Jinks perched herself on the foot of Georgiana's couch and proceeded to give a detailed account of the whole episode.

She was interrupted by the entrance of a maid, ushering in Gussie, red and out of breath.

"Oh, please, Miss Jinks, you're wanted home at once," panted Gussie.

Jinks made a wry face.

"I shan't go. Tell Miss Farnham you couldn't find me."

"Virginia!" admonished Mrs. Harding.

"It's only to give me a scolding, Mrs. Harding. Please don't send me home. Miss Farnham's been holding herself in all morning and I know she'll—she'll make me awful mad," she finished lamely, under Mrs. Harding's quiet gaze.

"But it isn't that," Gussie exclaimed with ill-concealed excitement. "It—it's something quite different, Miss Jinks. You'd better come."

Her tone was so grave and anxious that Jinks stared.

"Miss Farnham isn't really ill, is she?"

“No, no. Do come, Miss Jinks. Do make haste. They’re all waitin’ for you.”

“They? Not Mother and Father? Their train isn’t due till ——”

“No, not them, though it’s near the time. No, no, the man and the—the policeman and all,” replied Gussie nervously. “They’re all waitin’, and I said I’d fetch you, so be good and come.”

It was Mrs. Harding’s turn to express surprise.

“A policeman, did you say, Gussie? What has a policeman to do with Miss Jinks? Please explain.”

Gussie rolled her hands nervously in her apron.

“Please, ma’am, it’s about the man they took up last night—for the burglar, you know. And oh, Miss Jinks, you’ll tell ’em it was only you, won’t you? They’ve gone and took up Job Stebbins.”

Jinks stared from Gussie to Mrs. Harding for one terrified, bewildered moment. Then, without a word, she turned and ran from the room, the faithful Gussie following.

CHAPTER V

MORE CONSEQUENCES

WHEN Jinks reached home she found Miss Farnham, subdued and pink about the eyes, seated in the library, looking very much like an over-sized rabbit. Before her, standing on awkward, shuffling feet, were two village policemen, while between them, so self-effacing as to be overlooked at first glance, was Job Stebbins. When Jinks caught sight of Job she gave a sharp little cry of dismay. What in the world had Job Stebbins been doing now? Had there been a real burglar, after all?

Complete silence followed Jinks's entrance. She waited as long as she could stand it, for Miss Farnham to speak, and then remarked with becoming meekness:

"Here I am, Miss Farnham. Do you want me for anything?"

It was Miss Farnham's impulse to deny hotly that she could ever want her troublesome

young charge for anything whatsoever; to express the wish that she might never see her again. But she restrained her feelings. It is so seldom possible to be honest in the expression of our opinions.

“ I believe—Gussie has given me to understand that you may be able to explain, in some measure, this—this extraordinary situation.” And with a majestic wave of the hand Miss Farnham pointed out the policemen and their prisoner.

“ Do you mean can I tell you who he is? ” asked Jinks warily. “ He’s Job Stebbins, but what have the police to do with him? ”

“ He was brung in last night, Miss, charged with tryin’ to break in here,” explained one of the policemen, briefly. “ On the charge of the lady, there.”

Miss Farnham made a vigorous dissenting gesture.

“ And now the lady says she ain’t got no charge against him,” continued the policeman in an injured tone, “ and we don’t know what to do.”

“ Let him go,” suggested Jinks wisely.

“ He’s got a bad name ——”

“He hasn’t. He’s a good man, and works hard for his family.”

The policeman looked as if he would like to argue the matter, but Job straightened up, cast a grateful glance at Jinks and took on more the semblance of a man.

“Why don’t you let him go?” repeated Jinks. “He wasn’t doing anything, was he?”

“No—not as you’d say doin’ anything, Miss, but on t’other hand, he wasn’t helpin’ to hunt the real burglar.”

“For a good reason. There wasn’t any real burglar to hunt for. Was there, Miss Farnham?”

“I heard a noise,” declared Miss Farnham. She did not want to say anything to bring more suspicion upon Job Stebbins’s head, but she did think that Jinks ought to be forced into open confession of her prank. Miss Farnham could not overcome the belief that Jinks had planned the whole incident to frighten her.

“What sort of noise, Miss Farnham?” asked Jinks with pretended innocence.

“You ought to know what sort of noise, since you made it,” retorted Miss Farnham, falling into Jinks’s little trap.

Jinks turned to the policemen with a bland smile.

"There, you see, don't you? It is all a mistake. Miss Farnham heard—me, and got scared. That's all. Now please let Job go."

The policemen were not nimble minded.

"You don't mean to say as how *you* was the burglar, Miss!" gasped one of them, goggle-eyed with astonishment.

Miss Farnham snorted, speechless from indignation. Jinks giggled.

"I—she—that is, I ——" began Miss Farnham coldly, and then broke off impatiently: "It is all a mistake, don't you see? Please go away and take him with you. It is all a mistake, I tell you," and her voice trembled.

"A mistake?" echoed another feminine voice from the hall. "I should hope so. May I ask who committed the mistake of ushering a policeman into my—there, there, darlin' cutems, did him want to eat up the drefful ole policeman? Brave little Tootles."

The owner of the voice appeared in the doorway, a tall, handsome woman in the late thirties, dressed with rich simplicity. The end of her speech was obviously addressed to the tiny,

silky Pekinese dog which she carried over her left arm. Her right hand held a jewelled lorgnette to her eyes. The dog's shrill barking drowned the end of her sentence, and she dropped her lorgnette to hold a white gloved hand around his muzzle.

"Good heavens!" she ejaculated, stopping short. "*Two* policemen! What is it all about, Elizabeth? I suppose it is something about Jinks," she added in a resigned voice.

The policemen, feeling like trespassers, stared in dumb embarrassment. Miss Farnham, overcome by the untimeliness of this arrival, stared helplessly. Job Stebbins stared, since he had been doing nothing else from the beginning, and Jinks stared too, in absorbed interest.

"Well, Elizabeth?" went on Mrs. Babcock, after bestowing more caresses upon her dog. "What is it all about? What mischief can Jinks have got into since yesterday? And what are these—these people doing in my library?"

She muzzled the dog in the crook of her arm, and again raised her lorgnette.

The policemen, perspiring and abashed,

each took an arm of the limp Job and moved automatically across the room toward an open French window. Their one thought was to vanish from the scene, and Mrs. Babcock blocked the doorway. At their first movement the toy dog set up a fierce, mimic growling and barking; his mistress soothed him and under cover of the confusion Jinks called out to the policemen:

“You leave Job Stebbins alone! He hasn’t done anything wrong, and he shan’t be seen in your company.”

“Oh, Virginia!” reprimanded Mrs. Babcock.

The use of her full name always acted upon Jinks like an extinguisher. She dropped into a sulky heap upon the couch. Mrs. Babcock turned to ring the bell, but Ford appeared at the door at that moment to announce luncheon. No matter how grave a situation may be, one must eat!

“Ford, show these men into the back premises until Mr. Babcock can speak to them. And ask Mr. Babcock to come here.”

Jinks slid to the upper end of the couch and whispered to Ford:

"Mind you give Job Stebbins a good dinner."

"Now, Elizabeth," said Mrs. Babcock, sinking into a chair and coddling the still excited spaniel, "will you have the goodness to explain this extraordinary situation?"

Miss Farnham was trembling with nervous excitement. She was frankly afraid of her distant, rich relatives. Mrs. Babcock's quiet scorn set her trembling; Mr. Babcock's cool sarcasm reduced her to dust.

"Oh, Cousin Lilian, it is all a hideous mistake! But mayn't I explain in private?" And she glanced at Jinks.

"Don't mind bringing Jinks into it," responded Mrs. Babcock wearily. "I am quite prepared to hear that she is at the bottom of whatever it is."

Jinks flushed. She, precocious child, was well aware of her mother's readiness to believe the worst of her. But she made no attempt at self-defense, and Miss Farnham plunged helplessly into the middle of her story.

As she began to speak a gentleman, tall, lean and smooth-shaven, strolled to the doorway and stood leaning against the jamb, listen-

ing with an amused, lordly manner that was absurdly like his small daughter. Jinks sat up straighter and, though she exchanged neither word nor look with her father, behaved as if she had a friend at court.

"I was sitting here, reading," Miss Farnham explained. "Jinks had gone to bed because she couldn't come down to dinner, or go to the party."

"Couldn't?" mildly interposed Mrs. Babcock. "Was it a punishment? And what party?"

"No, not a punishment. She literally couldn't, Cousin Lilian. She had no clothes to wear."

Mrs. Babcock raised her lorgnette and surveyed Jinks.

"How extraordinary. I was under the impression that Jinks had rather a large wardrobe."

"But the trunks hadn't come, Cousin Lilian. And Mrs. Blake, not expecting us until to-day, had not finished the ironing. Then a good many of Jinks's clothes were left in the closet of her own room and the painters had barred the door."

"I see. And the embroidered frock you packed in her suitcase? That was not—good enough for the party?"

"She—Jinks met with an accident."

"To herself?" interposed Mr. Babcock.

"No, sir, to the dress."

"I see. Well, suppose we get on with the story. What has an accident to Jinks's dress to do with Job Stebbins and two policemen? There were two, were there not?"

"Yes, and they were stupidly mistaken. I never said Job Stebbins had anything to do with it," protested Miss Farnham, on the verge of tears.

Jinks giggled and was suppressed.

"Tell your story your own way, Elizabeth," Mrs. Babcock said resignedly. "But remember that luncheon is waiting."

"I was sitting here reading when—when I heard a noise," Miss Farnham repeated hurriedly, more confused than ever. "It was a noise like some one moving in the shrubbery outside the window. I remembered how easy it would be for any one to climb the pillars and into a second-story window. I was frightened and—and asked Ford and Overton to—to

search the house. I knew I must take no risks with you away, Cousin Lilian, and the painters might have left windows open.

"The cook heard that something was wrong, and got frightened, too. Before we realized it the alarm had spread and ——"

"Was that when Jinks met with the accident to her dress?" Mr. Babcock interrupted mildly.

"No," replied Miss Farnham, goaded to indignation, "it was Jinks sliding down the pillar to go to the party in—in a very inappropriate costume."

"It wasn't really inappropriate," denied Jinks; "it was a masquerade costume. And I didn't mean to scare Miss Farnham. I—I was afraid she wouldn't see the joke if I told her. And, anyhow, it was late, and the pillar was the quickest way out."

"I had said you couldn't go to the party, Jinks," Miss Farnham reminded her.

"I had to go. I thought it was going to be to-night, but when I found it was really last night I just had to go. I'd promised Madge Elwell I'd go to her party—whenever it was—and I kept my promise, that's all."

"Elizabeth is right. You should not have gone, Jinks."

"Don't destroy the child's sense of obligation, Lilian," interposed Mr. Babcock, and Jinks flung him a grateful look.

"I may be dense," Mr. Babcock went on, turning to Miss Farnham, "but I still don't see what the matter has to do with Job Stebbins's arrest, or Jinks's torn dress. By the way, my dear, shall I increase your dress allowance?"

"Don't be absurd, James. No amount of money could keep Jinks looking decent."

"I assure you I was as much astonished as any one to have Job Stebbins brought in," Miss Farnham exclaimed. "Gussie says—that is, she told Ford—that she heard that they found Job lurking about somewhere last night and—and as a burglar was reported—they ——"

"As a burglar was wanted, they thought him the most likely victim," concluded Mr. Babcock dryly. "I see."

"But you won't let them keep him, will you, Father?" broke in Jinks. "As there wasn't any burglar, of course he isn't him."

"Of course not. Perfectly sound reasoning," agreed her father gravely.

Mrs. Babcock rose wearily, tucking the toy spaniel in the crook of her arm.

"It seems like a great deal of fuss about nothing at all," she said irritably. "I suppose if there's nothing more to be said we may as well go in to lunch."

Jinks tugged at her father's coat to gain his attention.

"Say, Father, won't you please give Job Stebbins work at the mills?" she said in a low voice. "He needs a steady job, and he's a good man."

Mr. Babcock burst out laughing.

"Bless the child, what a business manner," he teased. "Since when have you begun hunting jobs for people? Gone in for social service work, have you?"

Jinks's feelings were hurt. She admired her father immensely, and it was humiliating never to have him take her seriously.

"I don't know what social service is," she replied with a catch in her voice, "but I think you ought to do it."

CHAPTER VI

MRS. BABCOCK SEES GEORGIANA

GLENDALE was a mill town, and Mr. James Babcock owned more than a half of the mills. Business required his constant residence in Glendale, and Mr. Babcock was quite satisfied with his fate. His daughter, if consulted, would have agreed with him most emphatically, for to Jinks, Glendale was quite perfect. To be sure, she was not entirely happy, but she took her surroundings for granted and regarded the united, contented home life of the Harding family as an enviable exception, her own neglect the natural order of things.

From this standpoint, life jogged on comfortably enough. The village offered a broad field for philanthropic efforts, and when her actions were misunderstood by the grown-ups, Jinks took her punishment with the stoic philosophy of youth, and went on her way, with undisturbed faith in her own beliefs and intentions.

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But Mrs. Babcock was far from happy or contented. Her only interest in philanthropy was to present the largest checks to local charities, and the monotonous round of small-town social life bored her extremely.

And yet Mrs. Babcock was convinced that she was sacrificing her own pleasure to her husband's interests, and took great credit to herself for remaining at home to look after her house and only daughter. She rewarded her efforts by short visits to friends or at resorts, varied with extended shopping trips to New York and journeys south for her health.

Upon the present occasion, Mrs. Babcock had resolved to give a house party. Whether her decision was based upon the appearance of the house which, with its fresh decorations, she wished to show off, like a new doll, or whether she felt the weight of social obligation, matters not. Her husband privately believed it was for the former reason—*she* considered herself moved by the latter responsibility.

“We really are indebted to so many people that I don't like to accept another invitation until we have made some return,” she said.

“Jinks is so subdued by that last outrageous prank of frightening Elizabeth and rousing the village that I think she can be trusted to behave herself for a while.”

Accordingly she set Miss Farnham at work making out lists and writing notes of invitation, and for the time being was sufficiently occupied with planning menus and programmes of entertainment, to keep her contented.

But her plans needed Miss Farnham's constant assistance and that estimable person was unable to maintain the strict watch she was accustomed to keep over Jinks. Jinks revelled in her unexpected freedom, and she and little Kate spent many blissful hours together, holding secret conclaves among the lilac bushes, and planning magnificent schemes for the betterment of the village children, of whom there were many deserving cases among the mill workers.

Mrs. Babcock called upon Mrs. Harding one day for the purpose of inviting her to the big house on the hill to spend the afternoon and meet the members of the house party as they arrived.

“The first afternoon is always trying, I

think," she said, "when not enough people have come to do anything, and every one is standing around wondering how to put in the time until dinner. I think the English way much better, where guests arrive when they please and are left to their own devices. But I shall have to talk to the latest comers, and Miss Farnham will be busy in the dining-room, so if you will pour tea, and walk in the garden with any who wants to, I shall be so much obliged."

Just then Georgiana, freshly sashed and curled for the afternoon, came in, and Mrs. Babcock stared with a sharp "Oh!" of admiration.

"This is my niece, Georgiana Harding," Mrs. Harding explained. "She has come to stay with us, as her sister has scarlet fever. Rosalie is not very ill, but naturally the quarantine is strict, and we are trying to keep Georgiana contented here. I must say she is taking it very philosophically," she added, as Georgiana went in quest of the other children.

"What a little beauty she is," responded Mrs. Babcock enthusiastically. "I hope she will come to play with Jinks some time."

Mrs. Harding looked surprised. She had

never seen Mrs. Babcock so enthusiastic. Indeed, that lady's usual manner was one of patronizing good will which the villagers found hard to accept. Their simple philosophy was that

“Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

But they were all too well bred to resent openly Mrs. Babcock's patronage, and tried to meet her offers of friendliness half-way. So Mrs. Harding received Mrs. Babcock's invitation graciously, but she could not resist adding, demurely:

“Georgiana may have anticipated your invitation to play with Jinks. The children are so often in the lilac bushes that it is hard to say when they are in your garden and when at home.”

“I hope Jinks does not make herself a nuisance. She is always so much better behaved when she is with your children. I am sure Georgiana will be a very good influence for her.”

Mrs. Babcock had taken a violent fancy to the pretty, dainty girl, and longed to possess

her, as, when a child, she had coveted a new doll, to dress up and preen. Jinks hated being dressed up.

“Why can’t the children come over to-morrow afternoon?” she asked, with more animation than Mrs. Harding had ever seen her display. “Do let them come, Mrs. Harding. Georgiana, I think you said her name was? Let them all come.”

“They will come, very gladly,” replied Mrs. Harding, secretly amused. And Mrs. Babcock took her leave serenely, adding as she went:

“I am sure your sweet young niece, Georgiana, would be the very best sort of friend Jinks could have, and I am glad she is to be here for so long. We shall expect them all to-morrow about four. Good-bye,” and Mrs. Babcock sailed majestically away in her motor, feeling very virtuous. Not only had she been more gracious than ever before to her neighbor, the wife of her husband’s closest business associate, but she had opened up a new vista for Jinks.

Mrs. Babcock’s house party was a great success. It happened that most of her guests were tired of formal, crowded functions, and

were delighted to settle down for a week to a round of simple tennis parties, motor rides, picnics and walks; with bridge and dancing in the evening. There were enough to make a party in themselves, and Miss Farnham was an indefatigable pianist, keeping excellent time and being familiar with all the latest tunes.

There was only one guest whom Mrs. Babcock feared that she might fail to please; a certain Mrs. Weatherby. Not that Mrs. Weatherby ever appeared difficult to please, and, as Mrs. Babcock observed to Miss Farnham while arranging her list, there was no particular reason why she should be pleased, any more than any one else. But Mrs. Weatherby was a social leader. Why, Mrs. Babcock did not know. She was not very rich, nor of a particularly imposing appearance. But certain it was that society in general recognized Mrs. Weatherby's power; and society in particular—that branch which included Mrs. Babcock and her "set"—was quite under her thumb. If a function did not meet with Mrs. Weatherby's approval, it was counted a failure.

Mrs. Babcock was intensely gratified, therefore, to have Mrs. Weatherby praise the fried

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chicken, the new frescoes in the drawing-room, the view from the terrace; she even found a kind word to say for Jinks.

Jinks was working hard these days. She had resolved to emulate the popular Georgiana; at least, to make the experiment, and with her usual energy entered into the undertaking, heart and soul. Jinks had one virtue to her credit; she was absolutely thorough in whatever she undertook, from making candy to making mischief.

Mrs. Babcock hardly knew her own daughter. The elegantly dressed, docile child who conversed with the ladies in the drawing-room after dinner was a remarkable contrast to the hoyden who climbed to perilous heights on trees and walls, who slid down veranda pillars to go to forbidden parties and—in short, to the Jinks familiar to the household. Both Mrs. Babcock and Miss Farnham had enough judgment and self-control to withhold all comment, but accepted the miracle in mute relief.

Then came a day when Mrs. Babcock's cup of bliss was filled to overflowing. A certain Mr. and Mrs. MacLeod telegraphed that they were passing through the district and asked if

they might spend the night at Glendale. The MacLeods had headed Mrs. Babcock's list—coming even before Mrs. Weatherby—but with small hope of securing their acceptance, they were so overengaged. Mrs. Weatherby, by virtue of family and tradition, was the acknowledged head of society at large, but Mr. and Mrs. MacLeod were the dictators of the “smart set.” They were like royalty in their power; why, they hardly knew the amount of their own income! And they were coming to stop over night with the Babcocks!

Mrs. Babcock was delirious with joy. It mattered not to her that the MacLeods were merely making a convenience of her. It was condescension for them even to do that.

The entire house party was in a flutter, with the exception, indeed, of Mrs. Weatherby and Jinks. The MacLeods were to arrive about tea time and, it being concluded that they would be tired, nothing was planned for their immediate entertainment except tea and an inspection of the gardens. In the evening there was to be a large dinner with a dance to follow.

The house and grounds were put into gar-

den-party order and at the hour mentioned by the MacLeods as the probable time of their arrival, the various guests could be seen strolling, alone or in groups, on the lawn in front of the house.

Mrs. Babcock kept Mrs. Weatherby at her side upon the terrace, for she felt a trifle nervous about the coming of these grand personages. Jinks, dressed for the occasion in a new, exquisitely embroidered frock, had been seated demurely at Mrs. Weatherby's side until a few moments before the visitors arrived. Mrs. Babcock glanced about for her hurriedly when Mrs. MacLeod, among other formalities, asked for "the dear daughter," but on the whole she was relieved that Jinks was not there. Even in her new perfection, there was left an element of uncertainty about Jinks. She might say the wrong thing, and first impressions are so important!

CHAPTER VII

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

AFTER escorting her guests to their rooms, Mrs. Babcock returned to the terrace to find Mrs. Weatherby placidly knitting by herself. The MacLeods had retired to their own rooms, Miss Farnham had sought the seclusion of the schoolroom and the other guests were scattered about the grounds and tennis court. In the background of her mind, Mrs. Babcock felt a fleeting pang of anxiety as to the whereabouts of Jinks, but decided that she must be with Miss Farnham.

Mrs. MacLeod emerged at the end of ten minutes, looking as sleek as a pussy that has had its fur smoothed.

“ I am ready for a cup of tea, a walk, or anything you please,” she announced amiably. “ Our husbands are already off to the stables. What a charming place you have, Mrs. Babcock. Next time you invite us on a house party I shall take good care not to have another

engagement. I am not in the least surprised to find you so perfectly at home here, Milly Weatherby," she added, tucking her hand familiarly into the crook of Mrs. Weatherby's elbow as they walked side by side down the path.

Mrs. Babcock, following meekly, fancied that Mrs. Weatherby stiffened a little at this freedom of speech and manner, but Mrs. Weatherby was as benignly gracious as usual as she pointed out the beauties of the lawn, leading the way to her favorite spot, the sunken garden with its lily-filled pond and the surrounding wall planted as a rock garden.

They had nearly reached this enclosure when, from behind the hedge of crimson ramblers that shut it off, came the sound of excited, childish voices.

"Hi, hi, Katie, head him off!" came in Jinks's high, shrill tones. "No, not that way, you goose! We'll lose him. Wave your arms at him."

"I am waving all the arms I've got," responded a panting, red-in-the-face voice. "He won't budge. He just sits and blinks."

"Oh, pshaw, *I'll* budge him!" (Jinks

again.) “The idea of letting a *frog* get the better of you. I’ll —— Oh!”

The sound of a violent splash, an ominous gurgle and a shrill scream startled the strolling ladies. Mrs. Babcock stopped short and put her hands over her ears, an absurd gesture, as if she wanted to shut out the disgraceful sound of Jinks’s fresh mischief, thought Mrs. Weatherby resentfully.

Mrs. Weatherby herself broke into a run, a very agile and creditable pace, and in a second was out of sight behind the rose hedge. Mrs. MacLeod followed, tottering on her high heels. Mrs. Babcock brought up the rear, angry and mortified. Why could not Jinks have remained quietly on the terrace!

No wonder Mrs. MacLeod broke into laughter as she rounded the hedge. Mrs. Weatherby, her skirts tucked unceremoniously above her knees and her body inclined well forward, was clutching in a firm grip two frantically waving legs, all that was visible of the unlucky Jinks. On the edge of the pond little Kate and Georgiana moaned and wrung their hands impotently.

“Run for help,” commanded Mrs. Weatherby

sternly, and her tone told the seriousness of the situation. "*Run!* Bring a man! Hurry!"

Thus admonished, the children ran off in different directions. Mrs. MacLeod stationed herself at a safe distance from splashing mud, but Mrs. Babcock hastened to Mrs. Weatherby's side. That lady was growing quite red in the face from her steady pulling effort at the legs, whose waving grew momentarily slower.

"What has happened?" demanded Mrs. Babcock in bewilderment. "Jinks, where are you? Why don't you come up? Let go of her, Mrs. Weatherby, her shoes are so muddy! It is a shame you should have been put in this awkward predicament. Do let go of her; she can swim. Jinks, get yourself up this moment! Oh, that child will kill me with mortification yet!"

"Mortification! Don't talk of that now," gasped Mrs. Weatherby. "Don't you realize the danger? The child is strangling down there in the mud! For pity's sake go get a man—a strong man—to pull her out!" She glanced over her shoulder. "Why doesn't

some one come? She's getting weaker every second! Here, Mrs. Babcock, perhaps together we can do it."

Transferring her grip to one leg, she motioned her hostess to take the other. Finally realizing the seriousness of the situation, Mrs. Babcock grasped Jinks's muddy ankle in both her large, white, immaculate hands and tugged futilely.

"No, no, not like that," panted Mrs. Weatherby. "We must pull together—a long, hard pull—*up!* Oh, we are not tall enough!"

She was sobbing now, and Mrs. Babcock remarked, with astonishment, that tears were rolling down her cheeks. Was it possible that the seemingly ludicrous situation could be so alarming? Was Jinks really in danger? A gasp of relief from Mrs. Weatherby caused her to look around. The gardener was running toward them, followed by the Harding children.

He was a tall, powerful man and as Mrs. Babcock and Mrs. Weatherby made way for him he seized Jinks's limp ankles and with a mighty upward heave, drew the immersed child

out of the oozing mud and laid her gently upon the grass.

Mrs. Babcock rushed forward with burning words of reproach, which turned to bitter ashes upon her tongue. Jinks lay immovable.

Kneeling beside her, Mrs. Weatherby dabbed her handkerchief in the pool and commenced to wash away the stiffening mud, revealing a white, set face and teeth tightly clenched. Mrs. Babcock cried out.

"She has swallowed some, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Weatherby in a low tone. "Stop that useless wailing, please, and go for more help. We want stimulants first, then a doctor. Here, Jansen, fetch somebody to help you carry Miss Virginia to the house."

"Let me do that. I ought to be caring for my own child," moaned Mrs. Babcock, almost out of her head with fright, and trying to take the handkerchief from Mrs. Weatherby's steady, deft fingers. "Oh, Jinks, Jinks, speak to me!"

At Mrs. Weatherby's mention of the word doctor, Georgiana and little Kate had fled again, terror lending wings to their feet. Mrs.

MacLeod, too, awakened to the gravity of the occasion, and joining the little group at the edge of the pool, she drew Mrs. Babcock aside.

"Mrs. Weatherby knows just what to do," she said sensibly. "Hadn't you better leave her with the child and go back to the house to get her room ready?"

Jansen scorned the idea of more help.

"Say the word, ma'am, and I'll take her. She won't be no more to me than a feather."

"Take her gently, then, Jansen. Now, let her head rest against your arm, please."

Mrs. Weatherby had assumed full command, and turning, led the way to the house. Mrs. Babcock, dazed and hysterical, suffered Mrs. MacLeod to conduct her in their train.

"We—we must telephone for the doctor," she whispered. "Do you think she's—she's ——?" She could not finish the sentence, and Mrs. MacLeod shuddered.

At the foot of the lawn they met Ford, running to them, followed breathlessly by Miss Farnham, carrying a bath towel in one hand and an empty hot-water bottle in the other. Miss Farnham had never been one to distinguish herself in emergencies.

Georgiana's cool little head had prompted her to do the right thing. Sending little Kate to fetch Miss Farnham and spread the alarm, she herself had dashed into the library and telephoned for the doctor, who arrived, post haste, as Jinks was being carried to her own room.

Jinks's clothes, and a little more of the slimy mud, having been removed, the doctor took charge, and a grave task he found before him; for the child, plunging head foremost into the muddy pond with her mouth open, had got her throat filled with the soft, choking stuff, and speedy as her rescue was, she was very nearly strangled.

It was late evening when she came to herself enough to know what was going on about her. She sat up in bed suddenly, as if listening.

"I don't hear any music," she exclaimed, addressing the motionless figure beside her bed.

Miss Farnham, roused from her doze, burst into tears.

"Oh, you poor childie! How thankful I am to hear your voice! Are you all right again, dearie?"

"Shut up, I'm listening! Ah, there it goes,"

Oh, Virginia!

and Jinks sank back upon her pillow with a sigh of relief. "Mother would never have forgiven me if I'd spoiled the party for Mrs. MacLeod. It's a jolly old tune, Miss Farnham. Can you hear it? I wish I could fiddle."

"Oh, Virginia, you ought not to speak as if your mother cared only to have her plans successfully carried out, at whatever cost. She was terribly upset about you this afternoon."

"Please keep quiet, I can't hear the music. Won't you open the door so I can hear it better? It sounds just like a circus," she added, her head cocked to one side to catch the strains of modern dance music that floated up to them.

When the music stopped Miss Farnham, feeling bound in her capacity of teacher to impress the seriousness of the recent episode upon her charge's mind, tried again to describe Mrs. Babcock's anxiety. But Jinks craftily affected weakness and a desire to sleep again.

"And I don't mind at all if you say good-night, Miss Farnham," she said politely. "It makes me sort of nervous to feel that somebody's watching every breath I draw."

“ I’ll sit on the other side of the room.”

“ That would be worse still. I’d be bobbing up to see if you’d dozed off before me. Can’t you leave me alone? ”

“ I was told not to. Gussie is going to sleep with you to-night. She has made up a bed on your couch. But she can’t come in until the party is over and she’s helped the guests on with their wraps.”

“ What! Do you mean to say I’m ill enough to have somebody sleep in here to take care of me?” demanded Jinks with interest, sitting up to survey the improvised bed. “ What fun! I guess Mother won’t scold me now.”

“ Scold you! When you came so near—so near—why, Virginia, I told you how terribly upset and anxious we have all been about you.”

“ Well, then, I think you might remember how I hate that name, and not rile me all up by using it,” answered Jinks irritably. “ Good-night, and please leave the door open so I can hear the music.”

Miss Farnham felt guiltily that she was doing wrong in leaving Jinks alone, and yet she feared to bring on a rise of temperature by

remaining to argue the case. The open door gave her confidence; she could hear any untoward sound that might come from the sick room, so she stole to the curved bench at the stair head and spent a blissful hour peering down at the gorgeous scene of wealth and fashion displayed below.

Jinks still felt weak enough to enjoy the softness of her bed, and the cool dark quiet of her room.

“If I were down there, I’d have had to wear those giddy light blue silk stockings and a sash,” she thought comfortably. “I’m sure Gussie and Ford will save some of the good things for me to eat. I do wonder what happened this afternoon? I shall ask Gussie. She’ll tell me all about it.”

With difficulty, she kept herself awake until Gussie, having adjusted the wrap of the last departing guest, and found lost gloves and fans, tiptoed wearily into the room to take up her voluntary night’s vigil. She had offered her services, when the doctor had said he did not wish the “invalid” to remain alone all night, and Mrs. Babcock had accepted eagerly, thus seeing a relief from the awkwardness of

turning Gussie out of her room for the accommodation of Mrs. MacLeod's maid. Gussie appreciated this advantage, and she also gloated inwardly over the triumph of being chosen instead of Miss Farnham.

"My lands, miss, are you awake!" she ejaculated in dismay as Jinks sat up in bed. "Do lie down, like a good child. You're much too sick to talk."

"I am not. I want to hear all about it, and you know perfectly well you've got to tell me," retorted Jinks calmly, "so go ahead. Were they all really scared when they found me sticking upside down out of the pool? It must have been awfully funny."

"I guess Mrs. Weatherby didn't find it so very funny," responded Gussie. "I tell you she's all right, Miss Jinks, she is."

"You bet she is," agreed Jinks enthusiastically. "Go on, Gussie. What did Mrs. Weatherby do, and what did Mother say? And how did the doctor get all that nasty ooze out of my mouth? Ugh! I could feel it going down and choking and gagging me!"

The two spent a cozy half hour rehearsing the gruesome details of the almost-tragedy,

and Jinks sighed ecstatically when she learned how grave the danger had been.

“Why, I’m a regular heroine, Gussie,” she exclaimed. “Won’t all the girls envy me!”

“It doesn’t sound just like the heroines I’ve read about,” objected Gussie. “The ones in books usually get into some—some *graceful* sort of trouble, with their golden locks waving in the breeze and—and all that; and a handsome hero comes to their rescue. But Jansen had to pull you out by your heels, Miss Jinks, and your hair was all clammy and plastered with mud. My word, you were a sight!”

“But I was nearly dead, too; you said so yourself, Gussie. And that’s what makes a heroine. You’ll see how I’ll get fussed over, to-morrow. I’m sorry I didn’t get the frog, though. Did you save me some marrons, Gussie?”

“You’re much too sick to eat candy, miss. And come to think of it, Mrs. Weatherby’s the real heroine. She got all white and teary, but she worked over you like a soldier till the doctor come. Dr. Penton said he guessed Mrs. Weatherby saved your life—while your mother



“OH, PSHAW, I’LL BUDGE HIM!”

was havin' high-strikes and Mrs. Mac-what's-her-name was keepin' her distance an' tellin' her husband in private that p'raps they'd have done better to go to the Inn. Oh, I tell you Mrs. Weatherby's all right. She's a true lady, she is."

Jinks sank back on her pillows with a groan.

"But they didn't go to the Inn, did they? Mother never would forgive me!"

"You bet they didn't—hadn't any intentions. And I hated like poison to give that maid of theirs—with her Frenchy airs—my room," grumbled Gussie.

"Well, I did you a good turn, anyhow, Gussie, giving you a chance to sleep in here with me. And if you were too mean to save me any candies, I know Ford kept me some."

"Well, it'll be because *I* told him to," retorted Gussie jealously. "I'm sure I've never yet give you the go-by, Miss Jinks."

Jinks yawned and cuddled down.

"Of course you never have, Gussie. You're an old dear. And I am a heroine, ain't I? Good-night."

CHAPTER VIII

AN INVITATION TO DRIVE

JINKS's pictures of appearing in the drawing-room, crowned with laurel, were doomed to disappointment. The house party broke up next day and Mrs. Babcock was much too occupied to do more than send a message to Jinks's room, bidding her remain in bed until the doctor had come. At one hour or another, all the guests were leaving, except Mrs. Weatherby.

To Mrs. Babcock's utter amazement, Mrs. Weatherby had remarked one day when they were out driving:

"I like this locality very much; it is so rural and peaceful. Do you suppose I could find a furnished cottage to let?"

"You mean to *live* here?" Mrs. Babcock responded. "Why, Mrs. Weatherby, you would die of boredom! I speak unselfishly, for it

would be a bit of heaven to me to have you as a neighbor."

"A very pretty speech, my dear. I meant for the rest of this summer. I think I could keep from being bored for that long."

"I'm sure we could find something. I'll speak to James about it. And of course you will stay on with me until the proper place is found."

"Thank you, I should be glad to," Mrs. Weatherby had replied quietly, and so the matter rested.

Jinks thoroughly enjoyed the luxury of breakfast in bed, her tray embellished with all sorts of unbreakfast-like dishes saved from the party by Ford and Gussie. When the doctor came he pronounced her so nearly recovered that she might be dressed and go down-stairs if she liked, after lunch.

"That is a great relief to my mind," said Mrs. Babcock when this message was brought to her, and she sent Miss Farnham up to lay out Jinks's clothes. To others it might have seemed a bit odd that a mother could not spare time to go to her only child, at least to see for herself how things were going. But Jinks was

used to such slighting and did not even know it was neglect.

Toward noon Mrs. Weatherby appeared in Jinks's doorway, at the same time as the devoted Gussie, who was bearing a large tray up breathlessly, between frantic demands from departing guests for this or that lost or forgotten article.

"How are you, my dear? You look very cool and quiet in here. May I sit with you a little while? Everything is in such a rush down-stairs."

"Oh, that would be fine! Then Miss Farnham doesn't need to stay," responded Jinks frankly. "You and I'll have a tea party, Mrs. Weatherby."

The tray had been set for two, and Miss Farnham relinquished her watch with regret, for she was fond of goodies.

"Was the party nice, Mrs. Weatherby? And did Mrs. MacLeod enjoy herself?" asked Jinks anxiously. "My, I was lucky not to have spoiled everything! Mother wouldn't have let life be worth living."

Mrs. Weatherby glanced across at the odd child, an impulsive reply on her tongue's end.

But she folded her lips over it tightly and some moments passed before she spoke again. Then she asked:

“Do you know that I am planning to spend the rest of the summer here, Jinks?”

“Not really! *Here?* Oh, Mrs. Weatherby, how tiptop fine and bully!”

“Not here in this house, dear, but in Glendale. Your mother is going to help me find a suitable house—with a garden.”

“I wish you were going to stay with us,” Jinks began in a disappointed voice, and then paused. “But if you’re living in a house of your own, you’ll like to have visitors, won’t you?”

“I shall be glad to have a certain visitor at any time,” replied Mrs. Weatherby, smiling.

“May I bring little Kate? And may we come often?”

“Yes to both questions; the oftener the better.”

“Oh, Mrs. Weatherby, you are an old dear! Aren’t you going to eat anything at all?”

“No, thank you, dear, and I advise you to be moderately careful. Yesterday’s experience

must have given your system something of a shock."

"It upset my stomach, if that's what you mean. But I'm all right again now. Have the MacLeods gone yet?"

"No, they go early this afternoon; but that reminds me that the Garrisons are leaving on this next train. I suppose I'd better go down and say good-bye to them." She glanced at the clock and put away her knitting. "Are you coming down-stairs to-day?"

"Maybe. It's rather fun staying here, but I guess I'll be tired of it after while, and the doctor said I might go down. Thanks for coming, Mrs. Weatherby. And oh—thanks for—for yesterday," she added, as awkward and shy over sentiment as a boy. "I—I'll see you later."

Jinks put on her kimono and had her luncheon tray placed on the low table by the window, whence she could watch the departing guests. Miss Farnham was in great distress over the state of Jinks's wardrobe.

"I declare, child, what with tears, getting caught in the rain and that wet paint, you haven't a decent frock left. I'm afraid yes-

terday's is ruined beyond repair, and it was so beautiful! Imported!"

"I'm glad of it. I hate the fussy thing. Let me put on a jumper and skirt. I've got plenty of those."

"What! Appear before Mrs. MacLeod in such array!"

"It would be properer than appearing before her in nothing at all," retorted Jinks saucily. "And I'd be comfortable, anyhow."

"I could never allow you to appear dressed like the child of a mill hand. Your mother would never forgive me."

"Then I'll wait up here till Mrs. MacLeod has gone," answered Jinks and, settling back luxuriously in her easy-chair, she opened a book.

"But your mother sent word you were to come down if you were able, and the doctor said you were able. Come, get dressed at once, and don't be disrespectful, my dear."

"What am I to dress in? You said I couldn't appear in the only thing I've got."

"Here is the very thing," exclaimed Miss Farnham, sorting over the contents of a

drawer. "It is a beautiful frock, and well laundered."

"That thing? Why, I outgrew that long ago!"

"Oh, no. It is not—not very much too small. Every one wears her skirts short nowadays, and you can remember not to wave your arms about and work the sleeves up. It is really the only thing you have."

Jinks loathed the frock in question, which was tight and loose in all the wrong places, besides being over elaborate. But she was too indifferent, and also still too weak, to argue much, so she wriggled herself into the mistaken bit of finery and, without glancing at herself in the mirror, went down-stairs.

Miss Farnham followed doubtfully. She had not realized that Jinks's arms and legs were so long, or so thin.

"The child looks positively underfed," reflected the plump governess, as if Jinks were to blame. "It's not very considerate of her."

The MacLeods were seated on the terrace, waiting for their car to be driven around from the garage. As is the case when people are

about to depart, and it is not worth while to start a new subject, conversation had languished. Mrs. MacLeod was the first to detect Jinks's approach, and she stared in frank amusement through her lorgnettes.

"Dear me, Mrs. Babcock, I did not realize—from all I saw of her yesterday—that your daughter was so—so tall. She must be older than I was given to understand—or that you are willing to admit, perhaps," she added playfully, surveying at closer range the discrepancies between Jinks's knees and elbows and the muslin ruffles.

"Jinks is big for her age," replied Mrs. Babcock stiffly, and glared at the small scarecrow. For a fleeting moment hatred dwelt in her soul for her only child.

Mrs. Weatherby saw and read the passing expression, and her lips tightened.

"I didn't want to put the thing on," Jinks objected crossly.

"It was that idiot Farnham, I presume. She never looks after the child properly," explained Mrs. Babcock. "Jinks, come and say how do you do to Mrs. MacLeod."

The eyes of the assembly thus drawn to her

unprepossessing appearance, Jinks turned as clumsily and unmanneredly as a boy on a school platform. She muttered a frowning greeting, stumbled over Mrs. MacLeod's parasol, and sought refuge in the chair to which Mrs. Weatherby beckoned her. She was distinctly disappointed. She had expected to be made much of, after her narrow escape, to be petted and asked how she felt, and whether she had been frightened when she went down, and so forth. Instead, she had been made ridiculous and sneered at.

Mrs. MacLeod's passing amusement smiled itself out, and was replaced by a look of irritation.

"What can have delayed the car, Malcolm? We are detaining everybody," she said fretfully.

"I'll send to inquire," Mr. Babcock was beginning, with the anxious air of speeding a parting guest, when the car swung around the corner of the house and the MacLeods departed in a stir of reanimation.

Jinks took advantage of the bustle to run up-stairs. Slamming the door of her own room, she stripped off the offending frock,

tearing it unmendably in the process, threw it in a tight wad in the corner and then jumped up and down on it in a paroxysm of rage, running her hands through her bobbed hair until every hair stood as erect as if some one had been telling her ghost stories. Then she felt better, and pulling out the coveted skirt and jumper, she put them on and ran down-stairs again, much less low in her mind. There, solace awaited her hurt pride.

Having been assured over the telephone that "Miss Jinks was down-stairs and feeling quite herself again," the Harding children, bound only by a promise of quiet play, had rushed across. They placed dozens of figurative laurel wreaths on Jinks's brow, they worshiped her, they asked breathless questions concerning every sensation she could have had or imagined she had, from the first gurgle of her plunge to the present moment. In short, they did everything and said everything that the grown-ups had left unsaid and undone. Jinks was herself again.

Until —

While they were still rehearsing the harrowing details, the small motor was driven around,

to take Mrs. Babcock and Mrs. Weatherby for a drive.

"There is room for one child between us," observed Mrs. Babcock graciously, beaming, as she spoke, upon the immaculate Georgiana. "Georgiana, my dear, would you care to come?"

At the sudden spasm of longing and—was it envy?—that swept across Jinks's small, thin face, Mrs. Weatherby felt a sudden lump in her throat.

"Wouldn't it be wiser to take Jinks?" she asked in a low tone. "It might be better for her than playing in the hot sun."

"Jinks is not to play in the sun. She will be disobedient if she does," answered Mrs. Babcock sharply. "Besides, she cannot leave her visitors. Come, Georgiana."

Wistfully, Jinks watched the car speed down the drive, the dainty, curly-haired Georgiana tucked complacently in between. Then, with that childish philosophy "which beareth all things," she accepted the situation.

"Come on, girls, let's go play in the garden," she said to Alice and little Kate. "Let's play 'Sleeping Beauty.' I'll be the beauty; you

don't mind, do you, little Kate? It's my chance, now Georgiana's away."

Alice and little Kate, accustomed to her lead, followed willingly. They did not question her dictates. To little Kate the F. P. was a perfect "beauty," sleeping or otherwise. Nor did they question when Jinks stopped short and observed, very wide of any point connected with sleeping beauties:

"When I grow up, all my children are going to have long curls and clean finger nails."

CHAPTER IX

THE "F. P." BESTOWS A GIFT

JINKS was curled up on the broad window seat, absorbed in "Castle Blair." If Miss Farnham had been present, she would have reproved Jinks indignantly, for her attitude was not elegant. However, it was exceedingly comfortable, and the book vitally interesting.

Outside, on the broad, shady terrace, her mother and Mrs. Weatherby were entertaining guests at tea, Miss Farnham, with a bit of useless embroidery, forming a modest background.

Roused at length by the appetizing clink of silver and china, Jinks sniffed.

"Cinnamon toast for tea!" she remarked to herself, and smacked her lips. "And spice cakes. How can I get some without going out there to hear them say how much I've grown?"

Raising herself on her elbow she took a survey. She did not want to put on company manners and join the group outside, but her craving for cinnamon toast was strong.

"There's no use trying to coax any more out of Emma. She hates making toast," she argued. "The tray's pretty near the window. I wonder if I couldn't snatch some? If I can get the screen up without its squeaking, I could make a long arm and grab when no one is looking."

She peered out, and calculated the distance. For the moment, the tea table, placed just under the screened window behind which Jinks sat, was the centre of attraction. Miss Farnham emerged from her seclusion long enough to be useful in the matter of passing cups, sugar, cream and so forth. Very shortly, her duties over, she retired to her own chair with a teacup and a goodly supply of accessories. It is astonishing how modest are the requirements of the average grown-up around a tea table. With heaping platefuls of goodies before them, and the prerogative of demolishing, they nibble and sip, and say, "No more, thank you," on the slightest provocation.

Oh, Virginia!

“ Oh, did cutems want his tea? ” Mrs. Babcock was saying to her toy dog. “ So him s’all, him s’all, cute little Tootles! ” And she poured a saucer of cream for the yapping spaniel.

Jinks took advantage of this side play to raise the window screen, but Miss Farnham hustled forward with an offer to do the cream pouring and she was obliged to lower it again softly.

“ Old hypocrite, ” she addressed Miss Farnham in a scornful whisper. “ Pretends to like Tootles when she can’t abide him. It’s just an excuse to help herself to more cake. If she eats it all up I’ll *give* it to her! ”

Mrs. Babcock had moved her chair so that it commanded a side view of the window, and Jinks was obliged to wait a fresh opportunity. As she watched, she listened disinterestedly to the conversation, evidently the renewal of a topic.

“ I don’t mean to say, by any means, that giving is a mistake, Mrs. Babcock, ” said one of the callers. “ Those whose only effort is the making out of a check, do their amount of good, too, naturally. What I meant was that giving

from the heart—at a sacrifice if need be—is what counts most."

"It depends on what counts most. Those who give from the heart can generally give much less," commented Mrs. Babcock, and leaned down to mumble foolish nothings to Tootles.

"And those who receive the benefit generally cannot tell in what spirit the gift was made," added Mrs. Weatherby practically.

"That is true of the organized charities," admitted Mrs. Norton, "though even there the spirit of a gift can be felt; whether it comes from the heart or merely the bank account ——"

"Does 'em hear the cruel lady," Mrs. Babcock observed to her dog, catching him up in her arms. "She says I haven't any heart, cutems—only a big, hard, check book. Cutems knows better 'n that, doesn't him, darlin'?"

"But what I was speaking of," Mrs. Norton continued patiently, "was individual effort, say in a town like our own, here. There are a good many cases of deserving poor; people who are too proud to ask or accept charity, but who cannot afford the comforts of life.

Mothers, say, who won't send their children to Sunday School because they haven't respectable clothes. I have encountered cases where I long so to help that I would gladly give the clothes off my back—if they would be accepted."

Jinks pricked up her ears. Giving the clothes off one's back sounded like rather an interesting form of charity—especially if one happened to be wearing a frock one detested. She interrupted herself in the midst of an engaging speculation as to how, in such a case, she could get herself conveyed home, to take advantage of an opportunity. Mrs. Babcock had moved her chair again, to point out a certain vista in the garden. Silently the screen window was raised, Jinks's arm shot out telescopically, and cautiously the silver cover that kept warm the toast was lifted and set aside. Then the remains of the dish were deftly conveyed inside the window, a second reach recovered the dish and the retreating hand bore an added levy of cakes.

Mrs. Weatherby caught sight of the manœuvre, and held her peace. Miss Farnham, her attention caught by a faint click,

glanced toward the tea-tray, and uttered a faint scream, whereupon a thin brown hand, doubled into an expressive fist, was shaken in her direction, and the screen was noiselessly lowered. No one paid any attention to Miss Farnham's cry. Perhaps they thought she had pricked her finger.

Munching her toast and cake, Jinks gave herself over to a delightful reverie.

"Gladly give the clothes off her back," she repeated dreamily. "Haven't I read a story somewhere of somebody who gave his cloak to a beggar—a saint somebody. Oh, yes, St. Martin! How nice if I gave my clothes away and was made a saint! There are all those hateful party clothes up on my bed, just home from the wash. Now, if I could give those away, it would certainly be from the bottom of my heart, as Mrs. Norton said. They'd make very nice Sunday School clothes for somebody. Let's see—why, the Stebbinses, of course! Sally Stebbins isn't much bigger 'n me, and they could take tucks in some of the others for the rest."

Rising on her elbow, Jinks took a survey of the terrace. Mrs. Weatherby, Mrs. Babcock

and the callers were strolling down a path in the direction of the sunken garden. Miss Farnham had produced a novel from somewhere and was engrossed in it. Jinks tiptoed up to her own room. As with all inspired minds, for Jinks to think a thing was to do it.

On her bed lay a dazzling array of freshness. Half a dozen white frocks, of exquisite fineness in texture and finish, were spread out, awaiting the careful fingers of Miss Farnham to inspect and lay them away in due order. As Jinks looked, a vague consciousness of their loveliness dawned upon her. She pictured them, not as adorning herself, but that exalted being she and little Kate fondly "played pretend" she was—a gift-bestowing, dainty, fairy princess. That dream princess looked like—yes, it must be admitted—she looked like Georgiana! How becoming those frocks would be to Georgiana. Jinks remembered her eager offer to present them, and Mrs. Babcock's sharp refusal. Georgiana was not an object of charity, Mrs. Babcock had said. But Jinks knew that, if such a gift had been possible, her mother would have been delighted

to deck out the dainty, golden-curled Georgiana in the French frocks.

"The only reason she wouldn't let me give 'em to Georgiana was because her mother mightn't like it," thought Jinks. "Well, then, she won't mind if I give 'em to somebody whose mother will like it. And if I can make any of the Stebbins family go to Sunday School, goodness knows it'll be doing a good deed. Besides, Mother knows I look like a starved monkey in these things. If I were pretty, like Georgiana, I might keep 'em and wear 'em, but—what's the use?"

She produced a dress-suit case, which she dusted out with a quick flip of her skirt, and laid in the frocks one by one, working fast, lest some one whose ideas might differ on the subject of charity should appear on the scene. She rather encouraged and even enjoyed the sparks of regret that the mere loveliness of the gauzy things kindled; for had not Mrs. Norton laid stress on the fact that sacrifice made the giving more precious?

"Now that I have nothing to wear, perhaps I won't have to come down-stairs and sit

around every time company comes," she thought consolingly.

Thinking she heard a footstep in the hall, Jinks thrust in the last garment hastily. Miss Farnham, as a matter of fact, had come up to attend to the very matter of those frocks, but her own room, as she passed it, looked so quiet and inviting, and the crisis of the novel she was reading was so absorbing that she yielded to the temptation to settle down over a final chapter or two by the way. When, after a long interval, she went into Jinks's room and found the frocks gone, she decided that Gussie had good-naturedly put them away. There was no time to hunt up Gussie to thank her before dressing for dinner. She would speak to her about it in the morning.

Jinks's next problem was to get out of the house unseen.

"It must be the back stairs, of course. Ford'll probably be in the pantry washing up the tea things, and I guess Gussie'll be in her own room, prinking. Anyhow, she won't ask as many questions as Miss Farnham if I do meet her."

As she had supposed, nobody was about. It

was an off hour for the servants. Jinks found it an easy matter to leave the house and grounds unperceived.

"How easy it would be to run away from home," she thought. "I could get miles away before any one missed me. I'd just have to choose this time of day, instead of the middle of the night, the way most of them do, when there's creaking stairs, rusty bolts and the dark to lose their way in. Nobody'd think I was running away, if they saw me, or try to stop me, at this time of day."

In her usual manner of visualizing any event, Jinks mapped out the whole episode, little dreaming that before so very long she would find the plan useful.

She longed, in this new scheme of philanthropy, for her bosom friend, the partner of all her joys—and mischiefs. But Mrs. Harding had taken all the girls off to visit a distant relative for the day, and little Kate was not available.

Jinks walked rapidly, down back lanes for the most part, for it was about the hour when her father returned from the factory, and though she confidently, if sadly, believed that

no movement of hers was of the slightest interest to Mr. Babcock, still the sight of the suitcase might cause him to ask awkward questions. She had not very far to go, and soon reached the Stebbins cottage, a little hot and out of breath, but filled with the glow of well doing.

Job Stebbins, since Mr. Babcock had taken him on at the mill, had kept steadily at his work, and his family were having their first taste of actual comfort. The children, if their raiment were still scanty, yet had full stomachs, and what mattered the former in summer weather? Mrs. Stebbins intended to save enough by winter for shoes and stockings. Sally, the oldest girl, did dream of hair bows and a sash, but they were just dreams, with no hope of fulfillment.

This afternoon Sally had been left in charge of the younger children while her mother ran in to a neighbor's for a bit of a word about the hard times; and Sally, idly rocking a crooning baby, was indulging in one of her customary day-dreams when Jinks appeared, a red-faced and impetuous fairy godmother.

"There, Sally Stebbins, see what I've

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brought you—a party dress. Two of 'em, if you want, and one for Edna. Maybe your mother can cut one over into a shirt-waist for herself, and if she's handy with her needle she could change one over for the baby."

By this time thoroughly interested in her project, Jinks opened the suitcase and spread out the cool, airy garments on the kitchen table.

"Do you think she can make use of them?" she asked. "They're for you all to go to Sunday School in, you know," she added virtuously.

"Can she make use of them!" gasped Sally, with clasped hands and tearful, staring eyes—heedless of the last part of the speech—"Oh, Miss Jinks, oh my land! Are they for us—sure?"

"Sure. Every one. I—I've outgrown 'em."

"Outgrown 'em? Too bad." Sally shifted the baby to one arm and fingered lovingly the ruffling muslin folds. "This is just the kind of dress I always thought I'd wear with my sash and hair bow," she said in a far-away voice.

"Oh, have you got a sash?"

“Only in my dr—I—it’s a game I have,” Sally confessed sheepishly.

“Oh, I see. Well, I’ll tell you a secret. I—you know, I’m a sort of—of fairy princess, Sally, and I like to make people’s wishes come true. Do you wish for a sash?”

“With all my heart!”

“Pink?”

“Well, I ——”

“Oh, please say pink.”

“Yes—pink.”

“With hair bows to match. Well, I’ll bring ’em down to-morrow. Where’s your mother?”

“She’s over to the Smiths’. Shall I fetch her?” And Sally started to put down the baby.

“No—no. I think it’s better this way,” replied Jinks hastily. It had occurred to her that Mrs. Stebbins might have doubts as to Jinks’s right to dispose of the frocks. Grown-ups have a disturbing way of questioning one’s rights, when one tries to do good. “Never mind. I’ll just leave ’em, and you tell her it’s all settled. And, Sally, suppose you don’t tell her where the dresses came from. It’ll be lots more fun, don’t you think? And she—she

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might want to thank me, you know. And fairies don't like being thanked when they give presents. You know that."

"My," sighed Sally, hugging the baby until he howled, "I wish *I* was a fairy princess!"

"It is real nice," agreed Jinks modestly. By this time she was enjoying herself immensely. "Anything else you'd like besides the sash?"

"And—you said hair bows?" Sally reminded her.

"Oh, yes, I'll remember. I guess I'd better go now. Good-bye. I'm glad you like the dresses—and mind you don't tell who gave 'em to you," she called back from the door.

Sally had every intention of keeping this promise, and as she rocked the baby again and gazed on the dazzling display, vowed solemnly that wild horses couldn't drag the secret from her breast. She practiced on Edna presently, when that curious youngster came in from play, all eyes and dirt.

"I ain't goin' to tell, not if you was to stab me for it, so keep your dirty fingers off 'em and stop guessing," she said loftily.

But alas for secrets locked in breasts! When

Mrs. Stebbins came in, saw the frocks and heard the "fairy godmother" story, she had no need to question further.

"There's only one child in town as has such silly notions, or would do such a naughty thing," she observed with patient irritation. "And besides, no other child has such pretty clothes. Miss Jinks do deserve a spankin', she does, even if she helped yer father get a steady job. Stop yer snivellin', Sally. You couldn't wear the dresses, even if we could keep 'em. They ain't fer the likes of us. And now I'll have to cart 'em back up the hill, and I'm tired enough to drop. Mis' Smith is sick, and I've been helpin' hang out her wash."

She sighed resignedly and set about doing up the frocks in a neat parcel.

"They oughter be pressed, but I'm so dead beat I dassen't try it. I'd be sure to set a hot iron on one of 'em."

"Oh, Mother, couldn't we keep one—just one?" wailed Sally. "They are so beautiful! Just one to wear to church!"

"It'd be just as wrong to keep one as the whole half dozen. Would you like yer Pa to lose his job again, just as he's gettin' on so

steady? That's what Mis' Babcock'd make her husband do. Do stop snufflin'. I declare to goodness, my nerves won't stand it. Don't you s'pose I *want* you to have nice clothes? There goes the baby. Fetch him his bottle while I tie up this bundle. 'Tween now an' Sunday I'll try to find time to do up the white piqué Mis' Harding give you. I'll make the time to do it up. And I'll buy you a hair bow. Now, are you satisfied?"

"Oh, yes, Ma," answered Sally in a dismal voice. "And I was satisfied enough afore. I wish Miss Jinks hadn't brung the things. Then I'd never have wanted 'em."

"Never you mind; she meant well. And we mustn't forget it was her as got her Pa to take your Pa on at the mills. The poor child has a kind heart."

Mrs. Stebbins sighed again and started toward the door. A spasm of pain distorted her face, and she leaned against the door-post to wait until it had passed.

"I guess I won't go up till after supper, Sally," she said breathlessly. "I'm so tuckered out I think I'll set still a bit and take a cup of tea."

"I'll get it for you, Ma. I'd love to. The baby's good now, and Edna 'n' Charlie are out playin'. Let's pretend we're ladies," she added eagerly, "havin' afternoon tea."

She set out two thick white cups and saucers, and filled the black teapot with water to warm it while the kettle came to a boil. Mrs. Stebbins entered into the game very willingly, since her part was to be lady visitor and "recline elegantly" in the rocker.

"How did you happen not to mean to tell me who'd give you the dresses?" she asked presently, watching Sally's capable fingers measuring out the tea.

"Why, Miss Jinks, she made me promise—cross my heart—not to. She said she was a fairy princess who ——"

"A *what?*"

"A fairy princess. That's what she said, Ma. That she was always doing good on the sly and granting people's wishes. She asked me to make a wish and I wished for a hair bow and sash. I wanted blue, but she said make it pink, so I did; and she said she'd bring 'em tomorrow, and ——"

"Oh, Sally, shame on you to ask for things!"

"I didn't ask, Ma. I just wished, like she told me to. Most fairies give three wishes, and them as takes 'em aren't thought greedy at all."

"A great girl like you, playin' such foolish games! You know as well as I do that Virginia Babcock's no fairy, and that 'wishin' to her fer things is the same as plain askin' for 'em."

"She *told* me to," muttered Sally with reddening face. "I couldn't just stand there and say nothin', could I? And sayin' I didn't want anything would be a lie!" She set the teapot down on the table in front of her mother with a bang. "I want lots of things," she declared with sudden fierceness. "I want—I want—oh, what's the use!" She checked her tears with a self-control that was splendid, and went back to the cupboard for the sugar bowl. "I'm spoilin' our party," she said.

As she sipped her tea, Mrs. Stebbins's mind was filled with rebellious thoughts.

"Why couldn't Miss Jinks uv kept her fussy clothes to herself," she reflected irritably. "She's just gone an' upset Sally fer days,

wishin' fer things she can't have. Though why Miss Jinks should have so many—she as don't want 'em, an' my Sally shouldn't have any when she wants decent things so bad, is more'n I know. It's a queer world, as the parson said. And Sally's got taste, an' good ideas, if she could carry 'em out. If only she had a chance!"

At the mansion on the hill, the family were assembled on the terrace, waiting for dinner to be announced. There had been a most magnificent sunset, which Mrs. Weatherby had enjoyed alone. Hearing some one approach, she had turned to express her admiration, but seeing only Mrs. Babcock, said nothing.

Mrs. Babcock, tall, if somewhat massive, and very beautiful in her clinging evening gown, strolled down the terrace, talking atrocious nonsense to Tootles. Doubtless Mrs. Babcock was aware there had been a sunset, as it was growing dark, but she was not interested.

Miss Farnham, leading a clean, demure and hungry Jinks, followed close behind. Mr. Babcock, pausing in the doorway to light a cigarette, was the last to join the group.

The scene—the wide, dim terrace, with the

deepening amethyst shadows of the garden on one side, and the soft light of electric lamps gleaming through the lace curtains of the many windows, pricking out the white front of the great house like some magician's palace, offered wondrous possibilities to the imagination. One might expect a band of elves to appear for a dance ——

Instead, a deprecatory Ford approached, trying to ward back, with protesting hand behind him, the figure of a gaunt, poorly dressed woman with a bundle.

"Sorry, Madam, but this—this person insists upon seeing you a moment. Though I told her dinner was announced, Madam, I could not keep her back," he said severely.

Every one turned, and at sight of Mrs. Stebbins, Jinks gave forth a sound that was a combination of scream and giggle, both choked down. It was drowned in the fierce barking of Tootles, who reared himself in mimic fierceness from his mistress's arm. Mrs. Stebbins drew back a step.

"Hush, hush, oo 'ittle darlin'," soothed Mrs. Babcock, administering a kiss to the bristled hair by way of reproof. "Cutems knows

he's safe. No one's goin' to hurt him, my p'ecious." Then she turned to Mrs. Stebbins and inquired, with a change of voice that an actress would have envied: "Well, my good woman, what do you wish to see me about?"

"Only about these, mem," answered Mrs. Stebbins, resenting the "good woman," but mindful of the fact that she was in the presence of her husband's employer. "I—they were left at my house while I was out, mem, and I thought as how there must be some mistake." As she spoke, she held out her bundle to Mrs. Babcock.

"Take it, Ford. Open it, and see what it is," commanded his mistress carelessly.

"My goodness me," reflected Mrs. Stebbins, "she can't even undo a package her own self. I shouldn't like to be that helpless!"

Jinks drew into the background. She guessed what the package contained, and decided that the present was not the time to reproach Mrs. Stebbins for betraying her good deeds.

When Ford had opened the bundle, Mrs. Babcock stared at it in uncomprehending sur-

prise until Miss Farnham's hysterical cry explained the situation.

"Oh, Virginia, you don't mean to say you were giving away your best frocks! What *will* you think of next!"

Every one turned to hear Jinks's answer, but Jinks was not there to give it. By the time Miss Farnham had pursued her to her own room, Jinks was prepared with a pose of innocent surprise. It was easier to handle Miss Farnham by herself. But this time Miss Farnham came armed with parental authority.

A dinnerless evening, followed by two days of imprisonment on short rations (except what Gussie smuggled up) failed to obtain from Jinks any admission that she had been in the wrong, and as Mrs. Babcock refused to discuss the question from Jinks's point of view, the final result was a gradual lapse into the regular routine.

CHAPTER X

THE MEANING OF ADOPTION

JINKS and little Kate were playing at the very foot of the garden. On the side opposite the Hardings' place, the Babcock grounds stretched away, in almost park-like extent, to a small brook, which farther down helped to feed the rushing mill-stream. Adjoining was a cluster of tenement houses, where dwelt the better, more thrifty class of mill workers.

The children were very fond of playing by this brook. It afforded sufficient scope even for Jinks's lively fancy. The trees that bordered it were thickly enough planted to become Sherwood Forest or the Forest of Arden, and the creek could at (Jinks's) will become a roaring torrent.

It happened that on this particular afternoon, Jinks and little Kate were alone. Madge Elwell had gone to the seashore with her parents, Alice was tied up with the cus-

tomary music lesson, and Georgiana, as so often happened nowadays, had been invited to go motoring with Mrs. Babcock and Mrs. Weatherby.

They were to go house hunting for Mrs. Weatherby, it was announced at luncheon, and Jinks had said wistfully:

“*I’d* like to go house hunting. It must be such fun to guess from the outside of a house where all the different rooms are, and then be able to go inside and see how near right you guessed. All the houses I’ve ever known, I seem to have seen the insides first.”

“How could that be? Don’t be ridiculous, Jinks,” chided her mother.

It was not at all ridiculous, as Jinks had meant it, but her mother’s tone made her too cross to explain.

“Oh, I know you won’t take me. You never do,” she retorted saucily.

“I certainly will not, after such impertinence,” Mrs. Babcock answered tartly, and there the subject ended.

The two children lolled on the bank of the creek, idly floating chips on the sluggish current. Somehow to-day Jinks could not think

of any game for two. Every idea called for "troups of Indians lurking behind the tree trunks," or "a band of ruffians seizing the Princess ——"

Floated across to them as they sat, the voices of two tenement children on the opposite bank.

"I'll be glad when I'm old enough to work in the mill," one voice said. "Then I can have money of my own and I'll buy lots of pretty clothes and go to parties."

"There ain't any parties here to go to, 'cept at Rollins's dance hall, and my Ma says they ain't respectable," replied another voice.

"Oh, she just says that to keep you home," exclaimed the first voice knowingly. "I mean to have a good time when I grow up, Reeney."

"Well, I'd like to have a good time, right now, goodness knows, but ——" the voices faded as the children moved out of hearing.

"I wish we could give 'em a good time," sighed Jinks, and conversation faded again.

Presently Jinks looked up from her chips.

"Little Kate, do you remember the other day, over at your house, we heard them all talking about adoption?"

"Um-um," answered little Kate, meaning no.

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“ Oh, you do. You asked Alice what adoption meant, and she said it meant ‘ choosing or electing ’; that people did it for rules at meetings. And ——”

“ Oh, yes,” chimed in little Kate, always glad to triumph over a slip of knowledge in her older sister. “ We knew it couldn’t mean that, because Mrs. Weatherby and mother were talking about children.”

“ I knew you remembered! Why did you say you didn’t?” demanded Jinks, inclined to argue.

“ Because I forgot,” replied little Kate serenely. “ What about it, Jinks?”

“ Well, I looked up the word in the dictionary, and it means ‘ to take the child of another as one’s own.’ ”

“ But that’s kidnapping,” objected little Kate, the details of the overheard conversation coming back to her. “ And Mrs. Weatherby said she thought it was right, and ought to be done oftener. I always thought kidnapping was terribly wicked.”

“ Oh, you don’t understand. It doesn’t mean taking any child you like,” returned Jinks with a superior air. “ If it did,” she

added as an afterthought, "Mother'd adopt Georgiana."

She fell into a revery considering, from every point of view she could invent, the desirability of Georgiana as a sister.

"I don't suppose her mother would spare her, would she?" she observed at length—a little anxiously.

"Whose mother?" asked little Kate, who naturally had not followed Jinks's train of thought.

"Why, Georgiana's."

"Spare her for what? You mean to stay on here after Rosalie's well?"

"No, I meant—for keeps. But I don't suppose it would happen. Never mind."

Little Kate was so used to Jinks's sometimes cryptic utterances that she had long ago learned to accept them without curiosity or comment. If Jinks intended further enlightenment, she always gave it. If not, the subject rested where she chose to abandon it. Little Kate was rarely curious.

"It means," Jinks went on after another pause, as if she had been talking on that one subject the whole time, "it means taking a

child or a baby out of an orphan asylum and telling everybody it is your child. See?"

"But we couldn't do that—you or me. Our mothers wouldn't let us. They wouldn't like it."

"They ought to like it. Think of the good it would do," returned Jinks, in imitation of a "social uplift" worker she had heard speak to the Girl Scouts. "Mrs. Weatherby said she thought it was a good thing to do, even if there were some children already in the family, she said. And she told about a friend of hers who adopted a sister for an only child—like me—and it worked bee-utifully."

"Is your mother going to adopt a sister for you?" asked little Kate with interest.

"Well, I haven't heard Mother say so, but it seems to me, if 'dopting a sister would be as improving for me as it was for Mrs. Weatherby's friend's little girl, that Mother would like it, if it was done for her."

"I guess she would," agreed little Kate with a frank acceptance of Mrs. Babcock's feelings toward her daughter. "Why don't you ask her to, Jinks?"

"Well—I thought—perhaps—I'd save her

trouble by—by doing it myself,” replied Jinks slowly.

Little Kate sat erect, fascinated by the immensity of this idea.

“ You are going to? Who’ll it be? ” she demanded breathlessly.

“ Well, you heard Regina Mahoney and Reeney Revel talking, didn’t you? Couldn’t we give them good times if—if they were my sisters? ”

“ Jinks! Oh, Jinks, what a glorious plan! When are you going to do it, and how? ”

“ Right now,” declared Jinks suddenly, fired by little Kate’s real enthusiasm. “ Let’s go over and tell ’em. Come on.”

Even as she spoke, Jinks had jumped across the brook, with little Kate at her heels. They found the two little girls stolidly employed in modeling cups and saucers out of clay from the creek bottom. In Renée’s (familiarly known as “ Reeney ”) hands the clay took on graceful shapes that hinted a real talent.

“ Hello, girls,” observed Jinks amiably.

“ Hello,” responded Regina and Renée, not understanding why the “ rich ’uns ” should be

on their side of the brook, and so on the defensive.

But the genuine admiration with which Jinks pounced on the cups disarmed them, and the four were soon chattering like magpies, while Renée showed Jinks how to twist and turn the hardening clay to produce a pretty, thin-stemmed goblet. Dipping her fingers in the stream, Renée gave several quick strokes and pinches to her work, then set the graceful, ugly-colored thing aside to bake in the sun.

“I wish I had colors to paint it with, and an oven to fire it,” she sighed. “My Pa says it’s real potter’s clay of a sort, and I could make things if ——” She broke off, embarrassed to find herself telling aloud her most secret ambition.

This wishing for something brought Jinks back to the object of their visit.

“I could get you colors—or send you to a real pottery to work if you and Regina’ll do as I want,” she said rather grandly.

“What do you want us to do?”

“I want to adopt you two girls as my sisters.”

Regina and Renée stared at each other in bewilderment.

“Gee!” gasped Regina.

“What does ‘adopt’ mean? How do you do it, and how would it make us your sisters? We ain’t even sisters to each other,” queried the more practical Renée.

“Nor no relation,” added Regina sorrowfully, as if that fact knocked down the whole rosy castle.

“That don’t matter—in adopting,” Jinks assured them airily, and explained the meaning of the word.

“But we have mothers of our own,” objected Renée.

“Will we have to ask them?” demanded Regina in a hopeless voice. Her mother had never yet consented to Regina’s doing anything jolly or adventurous.

“Of course you’ll have to ask your *mothers*,” interposed little Kate.

“I suppose we shall have to,” conceded Jinks reluctantly. “But we can start without telling them. Oh, dear, why are there always so many things in the way when you want to do good in the world! If only some of the in-

terferences would block the bad doings instead, life would be much easier."

"What are we to do, first?" asked Renée briskly. Her alert mind had seized upon Jinks's vague mention of pottery working, and she was eager to take the first step toward such a wonderful mark.

"Well, the first thing is to come over to my house and decide which room you'll have. You won't mind having a room together, will you? I guess the schoolroom will be best," she referred to little Kate, "or maybe that room in the third story that Mother calls the bachelor room. Yes, we'll use that, to begin with, anyhow. It's got two beds and a bath. Come along, girls."

The girls hung back.

"We promised we wouldn't go far away," explained Regina, and:

"Perhaps your mother wouldn't want us," quavered Renée.

"Well, that's just what's got to be settled," exclaimed Jinks impatiently. "We can't do anything without beginning, can we? Our house isn't far away, and nothing'll happen to you. Do let's go."

Perhaps misgivings were awaking in Jinks's mind, too? Perhaps she remembered how misunderstood her "Lady Bountiful" action had been in the case of Sally Stebbins and the frocks. But having begun on this new undertaking, she felt bound to see it through. Briefly she outlined her plan.

"I want to get you all cleaned up and in nice clothes, first thing. Mother sets great store on nice clothes."

"But we haven't got any nice clothes!"

"I have, lots. I won't give you the very best, of course. They didn't seem just—just the right things for Sally Stebbins and so ——"

"Oh, have you 'dopted Sally Stebbins, too?" asked Regina doubtfully. "I don't b'lieve my mother'll let me go then. She won't let me play with Sally Stebbins, 'cause her father was once in jail."

"Who, your mother's father?" asked little Kate with pardonable misunderstanding.

"No," snapped Regina, her freckled face turning beet red. "Are you tryin' to insult me?"

"Why, of course not, only you said ——"

"She meant Sally's father," interrupted

Jinks hastily, nudging little Kate into silence. "But that wasn't Sally's fault, Regina, and Job Stebbins is doing splendidly now. I heard Mr. Bateman tell Father so, down at the mill."

"Well, I can't help it, I can't play with Sally," persisted Regina, edging away. "And why won't you give us your best dresses?"

"Because—because we won't be going to parties all the time," replied Jinks, inspired. "And I haven't adopted Sally, anyhow. Come along." Then she turned. "Little Kate, you've got just the sort of dresses we need. You know, those gingham ones, all pink and blue plaid. Run along home and get a couple. Bring 'em to the back door and up the back stairs to the yellow room on the third floor—you know. You needn't let Gussie see you."

Little Kate nodded and ran off obediently. Jinks led the way through the grove and by a roundabout path to the house. She felt comparatively safe. Her mother was well out of the way, and so was Miss Farnham, for Jinks had seen her, dressed in frilled muslin, start off for the village library. That always

meant a whole afternoon, for Miss Farnham loved to dally in the big, cool room, chatting with the librarian and every chance visitor; and to stop on her homeward way at the ice-cream parlor.

But there was Gussie to consider. Jinks was quite well aware that, if Gussie laid eyes on Regina and Renée, especially in their present state, that those two "muckers" (Gussie's word) would be turned out without ceremony.

Therefore, the first move must be made with extreme caution. Jinks remembered writing in a copy-book, for some otherwise forgotten governess: "It is the first step that costs." Or was it a lesson in French translation? Whatever it came from, it was a good motto, and Jinks took it to mean that if she could only get the girls established, clean and properly clothed and brushed, the rest would be easy.

Ford was comfortably settled in his pantry, smothered in a copy of the "Sporting News." Bridget, the underhousemaid, and Gussie were all in their own rooms, taking a well-earned rest. Gussie, absorbed in a paper copy of "The Haughty Lady Imogen," thought she heard multiple footsteps and hushed giggling;

but concluded without concern that Jinks and little Kate had come into the house to play. They often went to the big storeroom at the back of the third story, to hunt up costumes for their games. Besides, it was not Gussie's fault if Jinks got into mischief. It was Miss Farnham's business to look after her.

"Miss Farnham's too fond of her own comfort and looks," reflected Gussie scornfully, as she turned a page. "I could take a lot better care of Jinks, and she'd be a deal happier with me doin' it, if only the Madam would think so. But the Madam thinks servants haven't got the right kind of sense. If she only knew it, we've got better sense, and know better how to behave proper, than a good many of her set. We could show 'em how ladies—real ladies—ought to act." And she turned the page to see if Lady Imogen was sufficiently haughty in rebuking the young duke.

Progress to the yellow room was slow, for Regina and Renée were keen to peep and exclaim in startled whispers at every step. They had never seen anything so regal as the tiled and linoleumed kitchen, with its muslin curtains and blue painted furniture. The back

stairway, in a subdued glory of blue and buff, awed them. But when, at the top, they had a glimpse into the front corridor, with its moss-colored velvet carpet and endless perspective of white enamelled bedroom doors, they were stricken dumb.

“My room’s down there,” whispered Jinks, pointing vaguely. “Come on, now. We must hurry or Mother’ll be home before we’re ready.”

The yellow room was situated near the head of the third story stairs, separated from the servants’ wing by a green baize door—such as Mrs. Babcock had read of in English novels, and was not happy until she possessed—and was furnished with much less luxuriousness than the rooms below. Which, of course, was why the clever Jinks had chosen it. If everything worked out well—if Regina and Renée “took” with Mrs. Babcock, well—they could be moved down-stairs later on.

While Regina and Renée ran about the room, staring and “oh”-ing over everything, Jinks bustled in and out busily. Turning on the hot water in the adjoining bathroom, she instructed the girls in turn to take complete

and thorough baths, with plenty of soap and hard scrubbing. She secured a plentiful supply of soap and towels and then, making repeated mouselike journeys to her own room, she produced a complete change of undergarments, a hair brush and other toilet requisites.

Little Kate was slow in coming with the dresses, but she arrived at last, with two pretty gingham, which she had had to borrow from Alice, she explained, as her mother was in little Kate's own room, sorting over outgrown clothes, and naturally might have been expected to ask questions.

After a great deal of splashing and giggling, Regina and Renée emerged, changed creatures. Their complexions were fresh and rosy. To Jinks's unspeakable delight, Renée's brown hair, when released from its tight pig-tails, curled entrancingly around her white forehead. Renée was really pretty, with enough French blood to give her thin face the charm of a high-bred oval.

Regina was not at all pretty, but she was a wholesome, nice-looking child, with straight yellow hair and blue eyes set well apart on each side of a snub nose.

Alice's dress was inclined not to meet across Regina's stocky shoulders, and Renée's thin arms protruded too far beyond her sleeves, but, such unimportant details aside, the two little girls presented a very pleasant and likable appearance.

Jinks and little Kate surveyed the results of their handiwork with pride.

"Hush!" said Jinks suddenly. "I hear the motor. I guess they're coming home."

CHAPTER XI

“ SISTERS ”

THE motorists returned in good spirits, for they had been successful in their search. At least Mrs. Weatherby was satisfied, and that was all that was necessary.

“ Though how you can be willing to live for the next two or three months in that pokey little cottage I don't understand,” Mrs. Babcock had remarked.

The house was small, but not at all pokey, such rooms as there were being large and airy, and charmingly furnished. The location was particularly inviting. Set on the hillside, the front lawn meandered down to the brook, which was broader and livelier here than the branch at the foot of the Babcock grounds. Behind, the hill rose rather steeply, and terminated in a small, evergreen-crowned peak, with gray boulders heaped about it. An orchard straggled up the hillside, and the trees bore

good fruit, apples and peaches, with two or three plum trees.

“Don’t you think it would be a nice place to play in, Georgiana?” Mrs. Weatherby had asked as they strolled through the orchard, and Georgiana had replied: “Oh, yes! Wouldn’t Jinks love it!”

Which was what Mrs. Weatherby had wanted to know.

Upon their return, Mrs. Babcock proposed tea up-stairs in her own sitting-room, as the day was still hot and she longed for the comfort of a negligée. Georgiana had been dropped at Mrs. Harding’s on the way home, so the two ladies settled down for a cozy half-hour’s tête-à-tête.

“When Mr. Babcock comes in, tell him we are up here, Ford,” said Mrs. Babcock. “Where is Miss Jinks?”

“She and Miss Kate is playing in the store-room,” replied Ford, who had just brought up the tea-tray. “And a deal of noise they’ve made about it, ma’am.”

Any presumption on the part of the servants to express their own opinions irritated Mrs. Babcock. Ford had not meant to complain

of Jinks. He was worried. He feared from the sounds that descended that Jinks was in mischief, and wanted some one to find out if all were well.

“Children cannot always be graven images,” retorted Mrs. Babcock with asperity. “That will be all, Ford.”

Mrs. Weatherby was quite comfortable in her simple lavender organdie; but Mrs. Babcock had changed to a tea-gown of foaming lace and chiffon, and was half reclining in a billowy wave upon a *chaise-longue*.

“Ah, quite a Madame Récamier picture,” remarked Mr. Babcock’s quiet, sarcastic voice from the doorway. “A very cozy scene. But is Jinks giving a party up-stairs?”

“Not that I am aware,” replied Mrs. Babcock, surprised. “Ford said she and little Kate were up there.”

“That hardly accounts for the amount of scuffling and giggling. Will you pour me a cup of tea, my dear?”

Upon this peaceful tea-party descended Jinks, for once in complete confidence of doing right. Little Kate followed, too overcome by admiration at the transformation she and

Jinks had worked, to feel self-conscious. In their wake came Regina and Renée, gazing wide-eyed and dumb at the Aladdin-Palace wonders surrounding them.

“Mother,” said Jinks, coming into the room in her best-company manner, “here are Regina and Reeney—I mean Renée. They were our neighbors, but they are now my sisters.”

Stupefied, the entire company stared at one another. Mr. Babcock was the first to recover.

“Two little queens!” he murmured with a chuckle.

Jinks, mistaking his remark for a tribute, counted him on her side and smiled gratefully.

“Wha—what *do* you mean, Jinks?” stammered Mrs. Babcock at last.

“Just what I say,” answered Jinks, beginning to wonder what had gone wrong. “Come and say how-do, girls. Don’t you remember a single thing I told you? See, Mother, how Reeney’s hair curls. I know you love curly hair. And Regina’s is a nice color,” she added loyally.

Mr. Babcock went off into a spasm of silent laughter. Mrs. Babcock looked ready to cry. So, for the matter of that, did Mrs. Weath-

erby. Jinks stared. Why didn't somebody speak?

“Aren't you going to—to welcome your—your new—*my sisters?*” she asked her mother reproachfully.

Somehow, she could not link these two stocky, stolid children to her frothy, magnificent mother with the word “daughter.” That revelation was the first hint to Jinks that possibly she had not made a wise selection.

“They are as clean as Georgiana,” she said defiantly, “and Reeney's hair is as curly. They want to have good times, and good things to eat, and I've got more of those than I need, and—and I need *friends*. And everybody says it's right to—to 'dopt people.”

Mrs. Babcock gasped and Mr. Babcock stopped laughing. He saw the pink color of wrath rising and spreading over his wife's neck and face, and turning to little Kate said politely:

“Suppose you take—er—Queenie and—ah—*Queenie*—down to see the garden, or—or to get something to eat in the—the ——”

“The servants' dining-room,” interposed Mrs. Babcock icily.

“No!” stormed Jinks. “You shan’t! Little Kate, make a party like we always do, down by the lilacs, and I’ll come as soon as I can. Father, won’t you tell Ford to give them things? Nice things. Reeney and Regina will help carry,” she called after the retreating children.

Mr. Babcock left the room behind them and Jinks turned to face her mother, really puzzled. Why did people say things were right until you did them, and then declare them all wrong?

Mrs. Babcock stared helplessly.

“Of all——” she began and stopped. “Where is Miss Farnham?” she demanded querulously. “Is she never around to keep you out of mischief?”

“But I wasn’t in mischief, Mother. I—I was doing a good deed.”

“Oh, Virginia, I am so tired of those ‘good deeds’ you are always talking about so meekly. I should think at least you might invent a new name for your naughtinesses.”

Jinks turned sulky.

“But you said ——” she began.

“I know what I said. Don’t get imperti-

ment. Are you entirely feeble-minded that you can never understand in the right way what I say? It is—well, discouraging.” And she put her lace-edged handkerchief to her eyes.

“I am afraid this business is my fault,” put in Mrs. Weatherby mildly, speaking for the first time. “I recall commending adoption very highly. Perhaps Jinks heard me?”

“If she did, she must have been eavesdropping,” replied Jinks’s mother, tartly, “for I am quite sure you never said anything of that sort to her.” She turned suddenly to Jinks. “Where did you get those dresses they have on?”

“They are Alice Harding’s.”

“Another complication!” said Mrs. Babcock with a groan. “Mrs. Harding will never want them back, and yet she will not let me pay her for them, I am sure.”

“Of course Mrs. Harding won’t take them back. We *gave* them to Reeney and Regina. If you had ever let me have clothes like that, I could have given some of my own,” added Jinks with an injured air.

“No doubt. And anything else to which

you might take a fancy. How would you like my string of pearls for them?"

Jinks shook her head, not knowing just how to take this sudden turn of generosity. At that moment Gussie knocked and entered with Tootles, whom she had been parading in the garden. A faint rumor of what was happening had reached her in the kitchen, and for once she was glad of Tootles—whom of course she hated—as an excuse for approaching headquarters.

"Oh, my 'ittle darling cutesy! Was him gone a long, long time? Come to him's lover-ess, the tootleums!" called Mrs. Babcock, holding out her arms as she had never held them out to Jinks.

"Mr. Babcock says, when you've finished with Miss Jinks, ma'am, will you go to him in the library, ma'am," said Gussie, putting the excitedly yapping spaniel on the couch beside his mistress.

As she spoke, Gussie glanced sympathetically at Jinks and, Mrs. Babcock being absorbed in Tootles, winked.

"When I've finished with Miss Jinks!" echoed Mrs. Babcock in the tone of one who

has thrown both hands in the air—only hers were occupied with caressing Tootles. “That will never be, Gussie. And Mr. Babcock knows I am in negligée. Go tell him he must speak to me here, Gussie. Oh, wait. Gussie, what sort of people are those—those tenement people down across the stream—you know.”

She said “people,” but her tone expressed “creatures.”

“There’s all kinds, ma’am, good and bad.”

“Well, I meant particularly — what are their names, Jinks?”

“Regina Mahoney and Renée Revel,” answered Jinks stoically. “Gussie knows they’re nice.”

“I know their mothers tries to bring ’em up proper, ma’am. They’re never allowed to run the streets.”

“And they’re just *starving* for good times,” broke in Jinks impetuously, feeling sure, thanks to Gussie’s wink, of an ally. “And I’m going to ’dopt them, Gussie, and give them education and larks. You’ll help me, won’t you, Gussie?”

“Sure, Miss ——” Gussie was beginning in

a startled voice; but Mrs. Babcock interposed sharply:

“Gussie will do nothing of the sort, Jinks, and you know perfectly well you can’t bring those common children into this house. Oh, dear, what can I say to convince her, Mrs. Weatherby?”

“I think Jinks has done a very kind act,” Mrs. Weatherby pronounced unexpectedly. “Not, perhaps—under the circumstances—exactly in the right way; but she has meant well, that is plain. Certainly she had no intention of naughtiness, so why not follow the way she has pointed out, Mrs. Babcock?”

Mrs. Babcock stared at her, amazed and a little suspicious.

“You can’t mean that you advise me to—to—actually to adopt those—those little gutter snipes?”

“The description hardly fits, from what I saw of them. No, I don’t mean adopt them, literally. I am quite sure that would not bring happiness to any one. Furthermore, their mothers would no doubt object. But you can give them the opportunities they long for—a set of simple but pretty clothes would

encourage them toward neatness and cleanliness of person. Perhaps they could be sent to school or educated for a trade ——”

“Reeney wants terribly to learn how to—to *potter*,” put in Jinks excitedly. “She makes such pretty cups and vases out of mud. I promised her she should go to a pottery works and learn. And Regina wants to do dress-making.”

“You shouldn’t interrupt your elders,” her mother said severely, as soon as she could get in her word, which was not until Jinks had got to the end of her breath. “Those are very meritorious wishes, certainly, if they could be carried out.”

Finding, to her surprise, that Mrs. Weatherby was on Jinks’s side, Mrs. Babcock was debating how she could swing that way too, with the least trouble to herself.

“I can make out a check,” she began again, following her train of thought.

“Who are the pretty children under the lilac bushes with Kate Harding?” asked Miss Farnham’s amiable voice in the doorway.

It was an unfortunate speech, made at an

unfortunate moment. Mrs. Babcock froze again.

“I don’t know what children you are talking about, Elizabeth, but I do know that if you stayed at home a little more, and performed the duty for which you are paid, Jinks would not be in *quite* so much mischief.”

“Oh, Cousin Lilian,” faltered Miss Farnham, turning pale. “What—what has Jinks done, now?”

Jinks did not care to hear her good intentions misrepresented, so she crossed over to Mrs. Weatherby’s side.

“You know I meant well,” she said in a low aside. “Thanks awfully, Mrs. Weatherby. It’s—it’s horrid to have people always think the wrong thing about you.” And for the first time since Mrs. Weatherby had known the child, she saw her lip quiver.

“Never mind, dear,” she whispered comfortingly. “We can fix this thing up if you will help me see it through. And when I move into my own house, we’ll try to have some of the sort of good times you like. How about it?”

“Oh, Mrs. Weatherby, do you mean you’ll

give parties? Real parties—without any grown-ups?”

Mrs. Weatherby nodded.

“When you see the place you will understand,” she said. “Behind the house there is an orchard where the elves dance every moonlight night; and at the top is a real robbers’ cave!”

“Oh, I think I know the place!” exclaimed Jinks in an ecstatic undertone. “We drove past it one day, and it looked so—so mysterious and—and asleep, don’t you know?—that we called it the enchanted palace. Of course it isn’t big, like a real palace—but it seemed too big for a cottage and just plain ‘house’ didn’t sound ——”

“Romantic enough? Suppose we call it ‘The Enchanted Manse,’ or ‘Enchanted Croft’—that means a wood, and there is the orchard behind—then we’ll try to have enchanting times there.”

“Oh, Mrs. Weatherby, I think that will be—be—enchanting! And may ——”

Their confidences were interrupted by a low cry of distress from Miss Farnham, who turned and left the room. She seemed to have

gone limp all at once, muslin dress and all.

"Now, Mrs. Weatherby, what were you about to suggest?" asked Mrs. Babcock suavely, soothing Tootles, whose nerves had been shaken by the late scene.

"I think it would be an excellent idea to see what arrangements could be made by which these two girls could fulfill their very practical ambitions. Their schooling would have to be paid for, and appropriate clothes provided them. Also, you may be required—or possibly would like to offer—a modest sum to each of their mothers, to make up to them for the loss of help the girls are in their own homes."

"That sounds very possible, if you are sure it will do? You don't think the parents will try to take advantage of this awkward proposal of Jinks to foist the girls off on us?"

"I feel quite sure they will not," answered Mrs. Weatherby positively.

Mrs. Babcock sighed, disentangled Tootles's paws from among her laces and roses.

"Then I'll go and talk it over with James. He will know how to put it all in a business form. But Jinks will have to make up to

Mrs. Harding in some way for taking Alice's frocks. I suppose the simplest arrangement will be to have new ones made and sent over to Alice.”

“Jinks will write a note of explanation and apology to Mrs. Harding right now, won't you, Jinks? I'll help with the spelling.”

With alacrity, Jinks seated herself at her mother's desk, selected a sheet of crested, scented note paper, curled her legs around the chair and her tongue around her lips and wondered what to say.

“Just give the facts, very honestly and clearly, Jinks, and let her see you are really sorry about telling little Kate to get the dresses. For it was naughty, Jinks, to take them without asking.”

“I told little Kate to get her own, but her mother was in little Kate's room, and there wasn't time to explain, you see.”

“Well, go on with the note, and bear in mind that one always has to explain. If you could remember that in time, Jinks, perhaps things might go differently sometimes.”

“Perhaps,” agreed Jinks politely, intent upon her composition.

It was the first time she had ever written a line to Mrs. Harding, and she felt very much as if she were addressing royalty. But, her tongue not tied by the presence of her idol, she found it easy to express some of the admiration she felt; also repentance, for she was always sorry when she had done anything to bring a look of disapproval into Mrs. Harding's eyes. Poor Jinks! She was nearly always in that state of mind regarding Mrs. Harding.

"It is a very nice note, Jinks; a very nice note, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Weatherby cordially, when she had read it. She was rather surprised.

Renée and Regina were more than satisfied with the arrangements offered them. Neither of them had taken in the suggestion of adoption further than an afternoon's entertainment. They had had their good time and were replete with jam sandwiches, cookies and raspberry shrub.

Moreover, the very idea of living forever in such glorified surroundings would have frightened them both, if they had realized what Jinks had meant. And when the kind-hearted Gussie gave them each a parcel of cookies to take

home to the children, they were quite willing, even eager, to depart.

“But we’ve got to change back into our own clothes first,” exclaimed Renée.

“No, these are yours. And you are going to have more like them,” answered Jinks grandly, all her Fairy Princess manner returning with the “happy-ending” conclusion to her venture.

The old dresses were made into bundles and the little girls were sent, beaming and skipping, down the garden, each armed with a talisman in the shape of a note from Mr. Babcock to each mother.

For once Jinks was not sent to bed in disgrace, and she realized that Mrs. Weatherby was the one who had accomplished the wonder. She was truly grateful. It was nice to be understood!

CHAPTER XII

JINKS GIVES THE FAMILY A FRIGHT

AGAIN Jinks's misguided well-doing had far-reaching consequences, unexpected at the time. A fortnight had passed, and Mrs. Harding was giving a small farewell party for Georgiana, who was to leave for home in a few days.

The party was one of a series. The village, always glad of an excuse for festivity, was bent upon speeding the parting guest. Madge Elwell had come home and had given another party, which Jinks had attended in her proper person and clothes.

On that occasion she had been so docile, and so cordial to Georgiana (it was after the French frocks had been spurned by the Stebbins family and Jinks was hoping to get rid of one or two by presenting them to Georgiana as a farewell gift), that Georgiana was emboldened to confess her first impressions.

“Do you remember the day I met you?”

she asked Jinks confidentially, as they sat over their ice-cream together. "When you put out the fire on little Kate's dress? That night Madge had a party, you know, and you turned up at the very end in the funniest costume! From something I heard Mrs. Elwell say, I thought—what do you suppose I thought?" she asked, rather afraid to go on.

"That I had run away, I suppose. I had, you know."

"Yes, I knew that, but I thought, too, that you were some poor little girl dressed up in—in borrowed clothes. You'd make a splendid actress, Jinks."

"Actress!" Jinks caught at the word with sparkling eyes. "Why, Georgiana, that's just what I'm going to be when I grow up!"

She had not thought of such a future until that moment, but its possibilities were vast.

Mrs. Weatherby had moved into her cottage, and she had given parties too, several of the small, informal kind that Jinks loved. Jinks was beginning to realize that the fact of Mrs. Weatherby's having taken a house in Glendale was going to make the summer happier for her.

The party on this particular afternoon at Mrs. Harding's was small, too, but in spite of the lovely day, cool for the end of August, it did not seem to go off very well. The reason was that Jinks, on whose genius for inventing amusing games the children always relied, was not feeling well.

Not that she owned up to the fact. She did not know, herself, what was the matter. She just felt cross and, as the others said, cantankerous. Even the ice-cream did not taste good. Each mouthful hurt her to swallow; not the sore throat kind of hurt, but as if she had swallowed a "sour-ball" whole and it had got wedged, somehow, into one side of her neck. An odd feeling and very annoying!

"I hate playing ball," she said at last. "It makes my head go round to look up at the sun. Let's tell stories."

So they huddled into a close heap under the lilac bushes and Jinks started what she intended to be a lurid first chapter of "rigma-role." The children all loved this game and as each had her turn to carry on the story, vied with the narrator before in horrors; plunging the heroine into blood-curdling adven-

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tures and hauling her through hairbreadth escapes.

"Once upon a time," began Jinks, "there was a wonderful actress. Oh, she was *so* wonderful! People travelled hundreds and thousands of miles to see her act. Her theatres were always crowded and packed to the window blinds, and kings sent for her to act before them. Oh, she was wonderful!"

"You've said that three times, Jinks," interposed Madge Elwell impatiently. "Get along with the story. What happened?"

"Well, one night, she—she disappeared," went on Jinks, lowering her voice mysteriously.

"Where?" "How?" demanded a breathless audience.

"That's for Madge to say," replied Jinks coolly.

"Oh, Jinks! Why, you haven't told anything at all!" remonstrated Madge.

"Yes, I have. The very heart of the mystery!"

"But your turn was so short."

"Introductions always are—or ought to be. I had meant to describe her a little; to tell what

sort of acting she did, and how—how wonderful she was, but you wouldn't let me," and Jinks broke off fretfully.

Without further discussion, Madge took up the tale, and it was carried along the usual lines of such stories. But as Jinks refused another turn, and no one else seemed inspired, it was brought to a rather commonplace ending.

"There, that is always the way with anything I try to do," exclaimed Jinks, with the air of a fatalist. "I had planned such a splendid mystery for that actress."

"Well, why didn't you tell it?"

"How could I after Madge had made her be discovered nursing an old woman through rheumatism! Nothing happens to people who disappear on such an ordinary errand as that!"

"Why, Jinks," reproved little Kate, "I thought you loved to do good deeds?"

"I do. Only, when I'm a great actress I mean to do more—more wonderful things than that."

"You certainly have a crush on that word wonderful, Jinks," commented Madge. "I can just see our English teacher drawing her

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red pencil under it each time, in a composition, and putting hateful little 'one, two, threes' over it."

"Well, if a thing is wonderful, why can't you say it is?" demanded Jinks. "And what could be more *wonderful*," she accented the word purposely, "than to be a great actress?"

"Most great actresses nowadays are acting for the moving pictures," observed Georgiana with a worldly-wise air.

Moving pictures came only occasionally to Glendale, and were still something of a novelty to the young people.

"Are they, honor bright?" demanded Jinks, sitting erect. "Why, it isn't anything to act for moving pictures! I could do it."

"Of course you could, F. P.," agreed little Kate adoringly.

"I don't believe it's any harder than reciting a piece of poetry. You just look the thing you want the people to think you're saying, and have your photograph taken."

"You don't suppose each picture is a separate photograph, do you?" asked Georgiana patronizingly. "The people all act their parts, just like they do on the stage, and a

man stands there turning his camera crank like a hurdy-gurdy, and that's what makes them move in the pictures. Every little wiggle they make is photographed."

"I know," chimed in Madge. "I saw them doing it at the seashore. Mother and I were walking down to the beach one morning, and we saw coming toward us a very stylish carriage, with really lovely horses and a coachman and footman on the box. Inside were two ladies, oh, elegantly dressed. It looked silly and overdone at that hour of the morning.

"Just before they passed us the carriage stopped, and a man with a camera stepped into the road and began squinting at them through the cloth (you know the way they do when you're having your picture taken). Mother and I thought they'd probably just got a new carriage or horses, and were having them photographed. But just then two men who had been standing on the curb—I thought watching, too—walked out into the street, took off their hats and began to talk to the ladies in the carriage. Then the man at the camera started turning his crank, just as Georgiana says, and

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Mother said, ' Oh, they're taking moving pictures!'

" I did so want to stay and see it all, but Mother wouldn't wait. If Father had been there I'm sure he'd have let me watch longer, and perhaps would have asked some of them what it was all about."

" Yes, that would have been fun," exclaimed Alice. " If you could have learned the name of the photoplay they were taking pictures for, why, you might see it some time."

" I almost took part in a moving picture once," announced Georgiana modestly. " A man came to our house one day and asked Mother if she minded some automobiles just driving into the place and out again. Our drive comes in by one gate, you know, goes in front of the door, and out another gate. They wanted Mother to let us children be out on the grass, in front, and we wanted to, awfully, of course, but Mother wouldn't let us. We watched out of the window, and I pulled the curtain aside, hoping I'd be taken, but I don't know."

" But what did the automobiles do? Tell us more!" demanded an interested chorus.

“ Well, first one of the girls of the company sat down on the lawn, and played with a ball or something. One automobile drove in, stopped in front of the door, and one of the men, who’d been standing behind a pillar, stepped forward as if he’d just come out the door, jumped into the car and it hurried away. The girl jumped up off the grass and looked after them. Then the second automobile came flying in through the gate, fast, shouted something to the girl, and she nodded and pointed up the road where the first automobile had gone, so the second automobile dashed after the first. And that’s all.

“ They came back in a few minutes to get the girl and the camera man, and it seemed silly to think the scene could ever look exciting or mysterious. When Father came home from the office he wanted to know who had cut up the driveway so outrageously with reckless driving; said if he’d been at home he would never have allowed it. But Rosalie and I thought it great fun.”

“ Of course you did,” sighed Jinks ecstatically. “ And if your mother had only let you, you might have been in it! You might have

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been the girl who pointed! Oh, Georgiana, what a chance!"

At dinner that evening, Jinks was so quiet and ate so little that even her mother remarked it.

"Don't you feel well, child?" she asked, looking up from a side conversation with Tootles.

"I'm not hungry," answered Jinks briefly. She did not add that her throat hurt, for fear of being swathed in a cold compress, which she hated.

"Too much party," remarked Mrs. Babcock sagely. "You must have a dose of oil. That's what I give my dearest Tootle-ums when his 'ittle tummy's upset, don't I, cutems? Ess. If you really don't want your chop, Jinks, give it to the sweetums. Ess, him does want a chop, doesn't him, darlin'? Elizabeth, see that Jinks gets a dose of oil."

"Yes, Cousin Lilian," replied Miss Farnham meekly, but with inward quaking for the struggle to come.

"Now, Jinks, be reasonable," she argued an hour later, standing, bottle and spoon in hand, beside Jinks's bed.

"I tell you, I've already taken the oil," repeated Jinks.

"How could you have taken it? There wasn't a drop in the house until we telephoned down to the drug store, and this has only just come."

"But I have taken it—I have. You ask Gussie."

"It is hardly likely you would keep castor oil secreted for your private ——"

"Who said anything about *castor* oil?"

"Your mother; you know that."

"Why, Miss Farnham," in a tone of great innocence, "I heard every word of the conversation. She said, 'a dose of oil.'"

"She meant castor oil, and it is the same thing."

"Oh, but it isn't! 'You might just as well say that you breathe when you sleep is the same as you sleep when you breathe,' " recited Jinks, letting her voice dwindle to a gradual silence, and pretending to be the dormouse she quoted.

But the next morning Jinks was really ill. Her head ached, and so did her throat and neck. Her head swam when she tried to

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get out of bed, and her lips felt puffy and hot.

Miss Farnham, stopping at the door to see if Jinks were ready to go down to breakfast, was alarmed at the child's appearance.

"Whatever in the world have you been doing to yourself?" she demanded in dismay.

"I haven't been doing *anything*," answered Jinks indignantly. "I'm just sick—awful sick. Perhaps I'm dying!" she added with sudden interest in her own state. "Call Mother, please."

Miss Farnham's terrified message brought both Mr. and Mrs. Babcock hurrying up from the breakfast table.

"Oh, Elizabeth, telephone for Dr. Penton at once," exclaimed Mrs. Babcock in great alarm. "Jinks, Jinks dear, tell me where you feel bad?"

"All over," came a hollow voice from the bed. "But in my heart most, I think."

"Oh, James, do you think it can be ptomaine poisoning?" asked Mrs. Babcock frantically. "She's so—so puffy and swollen. There might have been something wrong with the ice-cream yesterday."

Mr. Babcock surveyed his only child with speculative eyes.

"I'll wait until the doctor pronounces sentence," he said coolly. "If I should say what I think it is, on my own responsibility, you would all call me—unsympathetic."

"Then you are not frightened?"

"Not yet."

Mrs. Babcock drew him out into the hall.

"You don't think Jinks is shamming, do you?" she demanded, her wrath rising red in neck and cheeks.

"No—I don't think it is sham—certainly not all sham. But Jinks knows how to take full advantage of all the ills her flesh falls heir to."

"I don't know what you mean, James, and I sometimes think you are heartless. I believe Jinks is very ill. She certainly looks it. I shall sit with her until the doctor comes."

"Mother, Mother," called Jinks faintly, and Mrs. Babcock ran. "Mother, I have a—a last request to make."

"Oh, Jinks, don't talk like that!" cried Mrs. Babcock, thoroughly frightened. "Has

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Miss Farnham gone to telephone for the doctor?"

"Yes, Cousin Lilian," replied Miss Farnham's own voice, breathlessly, from the hall, "and he will be right up."

"You aren't listening, Mother," interposed Jinks. "I want to—to give something away."

"Oh, Jinks," quavered her mother with a half sob, "this is dreadful!"

"It is a French dress—two of 'em—to Georgiana—as a—a farewell present. Don't you think she would take 'em to—to remember me by? Her mother wouldn't mind if——Ow!" And she stopped suddenly to put a hand under one ear.

"Oh!" cried Miss Farnham, always able to make a bad matter worse, "could it be mastoiditis?"

Even Jinks looked scared at the prospect of an illness with such a long name, but stuck to the matter in hand.

"Well, can't Miss Farnham get 'em out now? Right this minute—and wrap 'em up? You choose which ones'll be most becoming to Georgiana. The fussiest ones I think'd look best with her curly hair."

Mr. Babcock strolled into the room again to find his wife and Miss Farnham in tears over the fumbling together of a package while Jinks lay weakly in bed, imagining that she looked like a dying saint, but in reality, only like a thin little girl with an unnaturally big face.

“Rubbish!” ejaculated Mr. Babcock when he heard Miss Farnham’s theory. “Here you two women are having hysteria because you’ve let yourselves get worked up on an empty stomach. Go down-stairs, both of you, and eat your breakfast. I’ll sit with the kid if she likes, until Gussie brings up her tray. She’s getting it ready now.”

Mrs. Babcock and Miss Farnham departed meekly, and Mr. Babcock entrenched himself behind the newspaper he had brought with him.

Jinks lay regarding what was visible of him, actually reduced to silence by the unheard-of situation of her father sitting there, in her room, in that intimate fashion. And at an hour when he was generally starting for his office. She must be very ill indeed, she reflected, and tears rose to her eyes.

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Gussie's arrival with the breakfast tray made a pleasant diversion and Jinks sat erect in bed with more animation than she had yet shown. But the first mouthful of food brought forth a wail.

"I can't eat!" she moaned. "It hurts! It hurts!"

Her father looked at her severely over the top of his paper.

"That will do, Jinks. Why, I thought you were a good sport." Jinks stared. "Can't you bear a little pain?"

"Of course I can, but ——"

"But you don't know what's the matter with you, and you're scared. You needn't be. You —— Ah, there's Dr. Penton now," as an automobile was heard to stop.

The doctor entered, followed by Mrs. Babcock and Miss Farnham. All the way upstairs they had poured forth a description of Jinks's symptoms and their fearful conclusions into the doctor's ears. But his first glimpse of Jinks dispelled the doctor's anxiety.

"Morning, Babcock; hello, honey," he observed cheerfully. "Got a well-developed case of mumps here, I see."

Mumps! Mrs. Babcock and Miss Farnham exchanged foolish glances and subsided. Mrs. Babcock took refuge in a side conversation with Tootles, whom she had carried up with her. Mr. Babcock rose with a chuckle.

"I don't suppose it's a case for a trained nurse, doctor?"

"Not a bit of it. Put Gussie in charge. She can do the little to be done,—poulticing with antiphlogistine, no draughts, liquid diet for a few days and so forth. If you can wait a minute, Babcock, I'll give you a lift down in my machine—save running yours. I'm going right by the mills. By the way, Mrs. Babcock, has Jinks been playing with any children lately?"

"Yes. Mrs. Harding had a party yesterday."

"You'd better warn the mothers. They'll have to go into a three-weeks' quarantine."

The telephoned news brought general consternation. Mrs. Harding was paying a morning call on Mrs. Weatherby when Miss Farnham, at Jinks's request, called up the latter to give her the news.

"We certainly do suffer from Jinks's vari-

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ous performances," groaned Mrs. Harding. "When it isn't one thing it's another."

"But you surely do not blame this misfortune on Jinks?"

"Oh, no—no, of course not. That's just it. Jinks is so *unlucky*. She means well but is—well, unfortunate in the way she carries out her plans. Now I must read just everything. Of course, Georgiana can't go home, with the risk of carrying this hateful disease to poor, delicate Rosalie. Mumps! I declare, Mrs. Weatherby, you don't know how characteristic it is for Jinks to get mumps, of all things—and just at this time. It is positively funny."

Mrs. Weatherby bade good-bye to her guest, but she did not look as if she thought it "funny" at all.

"Dear, sweet, chivalrous little Jinks," she reflected. "I wonder if this village will ever wake up to the fact that it has harbored one of the great ones of the earth?"

Which was taking much for granted, perhaps, but Mrs. Weatherby's faith was great.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RUINED MILL

JINKS spent an uncomfortable week. In spite of what the doctor had said, Mrs. Babcock wished to send for a nurse, but Gussie begged so hard to take care of the invalid, and declared so vehemently that she had had mumps twice on both sides, so there was no danger of contagion, that Mrs. Babcock gave in.

To Ford Gussie had confided:

“I’d rather trot for Miss Jinks any day than for a trained nurse—no better’n you or me, but always givin’ themselves as much airs as if they was royalty. Do you mind the time the Madam was ill with grippe?—or was that before your day? We had a nurse here who was so helpless she couldn’t carry a tray downstairs. She’d set it outside the Madam’s door and ring for a maid, mind you! The cheek of her!

“Miss Farnham was here then, and for once she had sense enough to see how things was, and she advised the Madam to hire in extra help for the week. And good advice it was for me and Anne Halleck—it was her that was second chambermaid then, her that married the miller’s man, over at the Forks—was near the end of our patience. No trained nurses in this establishment if I can help it, Ford.”

“Them’s my sentiments, too,” agreed Ford heartily. “They sure are plaguy nuisances. But is Miss Jinks very bad, Gussie?”

“Well, she’s downright miserable. She can’t enjoy her vittles, which is a worriment in itself. And she’s that low in her mind! I’m thankful Mrs. Weatherby is good to her. She’s a real lady, if you should ever think of makin’ a change, Ford. She’s white, she is—comin’ over here every blessed day to read aloud to Miss Jinks. And such a lot of cab fares to pay! I should think the Madam would offer to send for her, at the least. But indeed, no, instead of bein’ grateful, the Madam complains because Mrs. Weatherby won’t go drivin’ with her.”

“I heard Mrs. Weatherby’s hired Ed Car-

roll for the month. Some folks like to be independent—if they can afford it. Pretty soft snap for Ed, I call it. They say, too, that Miss Jinks's sickness has upset the whole town, everybody havin' to be quarantined, so to speak."

"And I suppose they blame Miss Jinks for it all, the stupid," replied Gussie resentfully, and took up the tray she had been preparing.

It was perfectly evident where Jinks had caught the mumps, and little Kate as well, who was stricken the following day. In the settlement across the brook a perfect epidemic of the disease was raging. Of course Jinks and little Kate had not known that, but Mrs. Babcock thought ordinary precautions might have been taken.

"I wish you would buy that land, James," she said, "and add it to the garden. Of course, if we send those two children with the silly names to a Normal School, they will be out of Jinks's way, but there's no knowing who she may pick up next. She may come home any day with a howling baby. There are plenty down in that neighborhood."

Mrs. Weatherby had been dining with the

Babcocks, and the three were sitting out on the terrace. Regardless of the loveliness of the summer night, Mr. Babcock had turned an electric reading lamp on his book and sat apart from the two ladies. Miss Farnham was upstairs with Jinks.

"I don't think you thoroughly understand Jinks," ventured Mrs. Weatherby. "She always means to do well."

"No, she only means to amuse herself. I think I shall send her to boarding school."

"Isn't she rather young for that?"

"She is forward enough to be taken for much older. Look at the activities of her mind. Who but Jinks could contrive such odd, exasperating forms of mischief?"

"Possibly boarding school would help—the right school," commented Mrs. Weatherby musingly. "It might guide her activities into the proper channel."

Mr. Babcock, who might as well have been at the mill for all he appeared to have heard of the conversation, looked up from his novel.

"I should hate to own that I could not bring up even one child without seeking the aid of an institution," he observed with that placid

sarcasm that was more irritating than abuse, but which luckily did not touch his wife.

“Well, any one who knows Jinks would understand why,” retorted Mrs. Babcock impatiently. “Now, if she were like Georgiana Harding!”

Mrs. Weatherby frowned and changed the subject. Later, alone in her own house, she thought over what Mrs. Babcock had said.

“Dear little Jinks, how can her father be so indifferent! Her nature is very like his, I think, and she has a great admiration for him. But instead of his understanding and trying to help her, he laughs and sneers at her by turn.

“Every one seems to dread the child’s company, even that intelligent Mrs. Harding, and yet none of them try to find out what is wrong. Why, Jinks is worth ten Georgianas, if only she could have the proper training! I believe I could manage her. I wonder——”

What Mrs. Weatherby wondered she did not express, but went to bed in a somewhat excited state of mind.

By the end of a week Jinks was feeling so much better that she was allowed to dress and wander about the house and grounds. She

had no playmates. Little Kate was still too ill to go out and Mrs. Harding was keeping the other children in strictest quarantine, in hopes that Georgiana would escape the malady.

Then another calamity overtook the household. Miss Farnham came down with the mumps. Poor Miss Farnham! It was not a becoming disease, and she was already oversensitive about the increasing tendency to a double chin. Moreover, Gussie flatly refused to "do for" her. Thus the necessity for a trained nurse was plain.

As the case was not serious, Dr. Penton suggested an undergraduate nurse, and, as it happened, a girl in her second year's training was taking a holiday over at the Forks. Dr. Penton called her on the telephone.

"You will find it very easy work, Miss Bingham," he said. "Practically nothing to do except keep the patient amused and out of draughts. Of course, there will be a good deal of fetching and carrying, but you are hale and hearty. It is a beautiful spot and you will have a good deal of leisure."

"I know where it is. It was pointed out to

me the other day when we were driving, as a 'show place.' I think I'd like to come. I suppose they will pay me well?"

"The usual rates for an undergraduate," replied the doctor dryly. "But as that includes board, it is well worth considering. You will have better fare than at Mrs. Jones's, I'll venture to say." He laughed. "As Jinks, the daughter of the house, would say, 'the eats are great.'"

"Who? Oh, I know, the queer child who is always getting everybody into trouble. I think I'd like to meet her. You say she is ill, too?"

"She came down with it first and is recovering rapidly. Your patient will be her governess, a sort of cousin of the family. You say you'll take the case?"

"Surely I will. When do you want me?"

"As soon as you can come. Shall I ask Mrs. Babcock to send the motor for you this afternoon?"

"At three o'clock. I'll be ready."

Jinks was interested in Miss Bingham's arrival. New people always interested Jinks. Miss Bingham was young, pretty, and with

lively manners. Jinks considered her a great addition to the household.

New people interested Miss Bingham, too, until the novelty wore off. Miss Farnham felt too ill, and too ashamed of her looks, to be entertaining. Mrs. Babcock was rarely visible and never without Tootles, and Miss Bingham was afraid of dogs. So Jinks was the only congenial member of the household, and Miss Bingham spent every moment she could spare from her actual duties with her in the garden.

"Such a wonderful garden," she sighed delightedly, "with so many surprises and unexpected beauty spots. It is like fairyland."

"We play it is fairyland sometimes," confided Jinks. "Kate Harding and I have great fun here, and I am always the fairy princess that brings wonderful gifts."

"How nice. Who is Kate Harding?"

"She lives next door, she and Alice. Georgiana, their cousin, has been visiting them; she's a beautiful girl with long golden curls," and Jinks sighed. "They're cross at me now because little Kate has mumps, too,

and Georgiana was to go home, and now she can't."

"And the little girl caught mumps from you?"

"We caught it together the day we 'dopted Reeney and Regina."

"Dear me, that sounds interesting."

"It isn't," rejoined Jinks quickly. "But my father's going to send them to school. Do you like nursing?"

Miss Bingham smiled at the grown-up air.

"Awfully," she answered heartily. "I can't make up my mind whether to stay in the hospital after I take my degree or go in for private nursing. I love the hospital, but private work pays better, and you meet such queer people.

"A girl I know was sent for to attend a case in a certain house—a beautiful young woman with two broken ribs. There seemed some sort of mystery about it all, and my friend found out that she was a 'movie' actress who had been hurt doing some steep climbing for a photoplay. The manager wanted the news of the accident kept quiet, because he was

afraid he could not get anybody else to risk taking that part."

"How thrilling!" exclaimed Jinks. "Wouldn't you like to be a moving picture actress? I would."

"Mercy, no, you funny child! It is a dog's life. There's a troupe of them over at the Forks now, boarding with Mrs. Jones."

"You don't mean it! Have you met them?"

"Why, yes; they're quite fun. I wonder they've never asked your father's permission to use this place for some of their scenes, it is so beautiful." And she looked about her with admiring eyes.

"I wish my father would let them. It would be exciting. But he wouldn't," added Jinks sorrowfully. "Have you seen them taking pictures?"

"Not this particular company, but I've watched others."

"It must be very interesting," commented Jinks wistfully.

Miss Bingham considered.

"They are taking pictures up at the old ruined mill," she said presently. "If Miss Farnham does not need me this afternoon, I'll

Oh, Virginia!

walk up there with you to watch them if you'd like it."

"If I'd like it!" cried Jinks. "Oh, Miss Bingham, it would be *perfect*! You are an angel! But Miss Farnham will be sure to want you," she added gloomily.

As it happened, Miss Farnham did not want her nurse that afternoon. As a matter of fact, she never wanted her, except to perform the most essential duties. She resented Miss Bingham's youthful, slender figure and cheerful manner. She imagined that the girl was secretly laughing at her.

"I must get Dr. Penton's permission to take you off the place," laughed Miss Bingham. "It would be very unprofessional to risk exposing any one to mumps."

"I think it will be perfectly safe to take a quiet country walk," Dr. Penton said when consulted. "Especially as pretty nearly everybody in the village who hasn't just had the mumps is down with it now. It is rather a farce to try any form of quarantine."

Miss Bingham had no idea of how much real pleasure she was giving Jinks in planning this walk. Jinks's curiosity about the art of

moving pictures had been stirred by Madge's and Georgiana's accounts, and it seemed almost too good to be true to think that she was actually to watch such a performance. She felt very grown up and worldly.

They had scarcely left their own grounds when Jinks saw Sally Stebbins on the other side of the road. She was dawdling along, head down and feet scuffling the dust.

"Hello, Sally," called Jinks sociably. "Where you going?"

"Nowhere."

"Well, I wish you could go with us, but I don't suppose your mother'd let you."

"Why not?" demanded Sally, stopping short. "You mean *your* mother wouldn't let you go with me."

Jinks overlooked this remark.

"I'm just getting over the mumps, you see, and nobody wants me around. This is Miss Bingham," she added politely. "She is taking care of Miss Farnham."

"Is Miss Farnham sick?" Sally was edging slowly across the road.

"Yes, she's got mumps, too," and the two children grinned at each other.

"So've I," confided Sally. "We've all had it at our house, and I got so sick of taking care of 'em all that I—I almost thought I'd run away." She glanced uneasily at Miss Bingham. "Anyhow, I've come out for a walk. May I come with you?"

"Of course you may," declared Jinks heartily. And if Miss Bingham was not altogether pleased by the addition to their party she said nothing.

The valley of the ruined mill was a spot of rough, wild beauty, and could easily become the scene of any sort of adventure. The stream poured down a rocky gorge, overgrown and desolate looking enough to be miles from civilization.

The moving picture people were working in a glen, at the lower edge of the gorge, and Miss Bingham with her two charges perched on a boulder well out of range of the camera and watched.

The scene enacted on this particular afternoon was a kidnapping, and Jinks and Sally watched with breathless interest. Both country-bred, the children knew nothing whatever about the mechanical side of this great indus-

try, and it was all as real to them as the scenes of a drama. Jinks felt as if she were watching a play from behind the scenes.

The masked bandits concealed behind the bushes; the gay riders innocent of danger; the rearing, startled horses; the capture and the wild riding and pursuit up the gorge—until the camera's range limit was reached—it was all thrilling and very real. Nor was the illusion spoiled by the after-behavior of the actors, who, as soon as their "scene" was over, relaxed into childish games and pranks.

"That is all for to-day, girls," Miss Bingham said at last. "You see the director is ordering things packed up. They need bright light for their pictures. And we must be hurrying home, or Jinks will be catching fresh cold."

"It's been fine, Miss Bingham. I think you were awfully good to take us," said Jinks enthusiastically. "Do you suppose they'll be taking pictures again to-morrow?"

Miss Bingham laughed at the broad hint. She was used to city children, with their airs of knowing all about life and of being through

with thrills and adventures. She liked Jinks's enthusiasm.

"Would you like to come again to-morrow? I am willing if Miss Farnham can spare me."

"Oh, she'll spare you, I guess. She's sure to if she has a new book to read, and Mrs. Weatherby was going to bring her over some to-day," answered Jinks. "Do you want to come too, Sally?"

"Sure," replied Sally promptly.

The afternoon had done Sally a great deal of good. It had lifted her mind for the time being above the level of small worries and the sameness of every-day life, which Sally needed just then, more than any one guessed.

So it was arranged that Sally should be waiting for them at the foot of the garden at the same hour the next afternoon.

"And we'll bring some 'eats,'" added Jinks hungrily. "I don't see why I didn't think of it to-day. Aren't you starved, Sally? I am. Say, wait at the foot of the garden now and I'll bring you a handful of cookies."

And while Miss Bingham hurried up-stairs to see how her patient was getting on, the two girls munched cakes and chattered about the

events of the afternoon and the promised joys of to-morrow.

With the strange lady absent, Sally grew more confidential about her own troubles.

“Honest, Jinks, you don’t know how I was feelin’ this afternoon when I met you. I—I was just about ready to do anything. I’m so sick of work, work, work. No pretty clothes, no fun, not even school. I wish I could have something different.”

“Your father’s got a steady job now,” consoled Jinks. “I guess you have a little more with his pay?”

“Oh, yes, and Ma never stops talkin’ about how you got him that job. But with so many of us, even that don’t go very far.”

Jinks glowed with the comfort of knowing that she had done one good deed, at all events, and she felt suddenly responsible for Sally’s welfare.

“Well, we’ll see what can be done,” she said with her grand manner. “We’ll see.”

“Why, do you know, Jinks, this afternoon I was thinkin’”—she glanced about and lowered her voice, “I was thinkin’ of *running away!*”

Oh, Virginia!

“You don’t mean it!” exclaimed Jinks.

“Yes, I do. I was. But—I guess I won’t go just yet. Good-bye, Jinks, and thanks awfully. I’ll see you to-morrow.” And waving a cookie, Sally ran off.

Jinks stared after her in deep thought. Sally had thought of running away. How romantic!

“I’d like to go, too,” thought Jinks excitedly, picturing a Great Adventure.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BURNING OF THE MILL

THAT evening a long-distance telephone call summoned Miss Bingham back to town. Her sister was ill and she was needed at home.

"Isn't that just my luck," grumbled Jinks to Gussie when she heard the news. "Just as soon as I get to liking anybody, they have to be taken away."

"I haven't been taken away," remarked Gussie in the tone of one who fishes for a compliment.

"Thank goodness," answered Jinks, fervently enough to satisfy the maid's vanity. "But then, I'm used to you," she added, unintentionally spoiling her effect.

"Miss Bingham is nicer'n most trained nurses," Gussie was forced to admit.

"Nicer? I should say so. She isn't a bit high and mighty. And, Gussie, what do you think? She knows moving picture actors and actresses!"

Oh, Virginia!

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, and she took Sally Stebbins and me to see 'em act to-day."

"What would your mother say?"

"Why should she say anything, I'd like to know? What harm could there be in my watching people getting their pictures taken? Only, I suppose Mother'd put a stop to it just because I like it. I declare, nobody ever wants me to do anything, Gussie. When I try to do good to other people, they call it mischief, and when I'm just plain enjoying myself, there's sure to be somebody to think it's wrong. Gussie, sometimes I think I'll run away."

"How you do talk, Miss Jinks," laughed Gussie, putting out the light. "You certainly are getting better."

Miss Bingham departed, regretfully, by the morning train. Miss Farnham was recovered enough by now to take care of herself, and the second housemaid carried up her meals.

All morning Jinks pondered over what she had better do about the afternoon's engagement.

"Sally's so unhappy, it doesn't seem fair to make her miss any little fun she has a chance

of getting. I wish I knew somebody who'd go with us."

It was Gussie's day off, and she and Mrs. Harding's Bridget had an engagement together. Jinks thought of confiding in Mrs. Weatherby, but was afraid. Her experience in the field of grown-ups failing to understand had been too wide for her to hope for any different point of view. In spite of Mrs. Weatherby's loyal and constant standing up for Jinks, she had not yet won the child's full confidence.

"I guess Sally and I'll have to go by ourselves," Jinks decided at last. "It's perfectly safe and Sally's a big girl."

Ford helped her prepare sandwiches and cakes "for a tea-party down in the grove," and at the appointed hour Jinks was at the meeting place, picnic basket in hand. Sally was already there, waiting.

"Hello," greeted Jinks, "we'll have to go by ourselves to-day, Sally. Miss Bingham's gone."

"Gone! What for? Didn't she suit?"

"Oh, yes, only her sister's ill and she had to go home. I suppose her people thought there

was no use in having a trained nurse in the family if she couldn't help out at home, so they sent for her. You know the way, don't you?"

"With my eyes shut," answered Sally, who was familiar with the entire region. "Come on. I think it's more fun by ourselves, anyhow. Here, let me carry the basket. What's in it? All eats? Oh, my, how nice!"

The two children had a perfect time. For some reason the kidnapping scenes had to be gone through again, and Jinks found no loss of interest in the repetition. Indeed, she was more entertained, because she could take her attention from the actors for an occasional survey of the camera man, whose actions were well worth watching. At one period, to get the exact background he wanted, he had to set up his camera in a pool at the foot of the mill. Luckily the tripod legs of the instrument were long and so protected it from the water while the operator, clad in high rubber boots, stood knee deep in the pond, grinding his machine in perfect gravity.

While the troupe rested, one of the actors caught sight of the children on the hillside and pointed them out to the others. Sally was for

retreating, but Jinks waved and nodded back in friendly fashion.

"Isn't it fun!" she exclaimed. "When I grow big, Sally, *I'm* going to be a 'movie' actress."

"Honest? So am I!" answered Sally in a burst of confidence. "You know I can act real well, Jinks. I often make up plays for the young uns. Sometimes I scare 'em, I'm so fierce. And I can make Ma laugh any time, taking off Mrs. Ba—different neighbors," she added, checking herself in time.

For Sally's real talent was for imitation, and the comic presentation she gave of Mrs. Babcock was a source of delight to all her mother's intimate friends. But of course Sally could not tell Jinks that.

"Let's come again to-morrow," said Jinks, when they had waved farewell to the departing troupe.

"Sure," agreed Sally, and the next day found them at their watching post on the hillside above the ruined mill.

On that afternoon was depicted the hiding of the heroine in a cave on the hillside, and her thrilling escape by travelling hand over hand

across a rope, with which she had lassoed a rock and had then drawn taut, very near the spot where Jinks and Sally sat.

The heroine flung herself, laughing and breathless, beside the two children, to rest after this daring feat, and fell to talking to them. The tales she told of tight-rope walking, leaping from burning buildings and racing automobiles, all in the pursuit of her trade, thrilled Jinks to the point of bursting.

"Be sure to come again to-morrow," the young woman said at parting. "It is going to be great fun."

Of course, after that, nothing could have kept the girls away, although Jinks had to tell Miss Farnham something very near a falsehood, and Sally actually quarreled with her mother, who had wanted her to stay at home and mind the baby.

"Well, then," remarked Sally resignedly, when her mother had gone, leaving her in charge, "I'll just take the baby with me." And thus settling the question, Sally arrived at the meeting place with the placid infant in his coach.

"I didn't think you'd mind my bringing

him," she said apologetically. "He's most always as good as gold and, anyhow, it was either that or stay home."

"Oh, I don't mind, if you won't get tired pushing the coach," replied Jinks. "I think she's cunning. What's her name?"

"It's a boy," answered Sally, "and his name is James—after your father. You don't think your father would mind, do you? We hadn't got any name yet, and Ma was so grateful to Mr. Babcock for taking Dad on."

"Oh, he wouldn't mind," said Jinks generously.

"If it was a girl, Ma would have named it after you, she said," went on Sally.

"Not honestly? After me? Jinks?"

"No, Virginia."

Jinks shuddered.

"Then I'm glad it's a boy," she declared positively. "I should just love to be thought great and—and important enough to have somebody want to name a baby after me, but I just couldn't bear to have that name wished on anybody."

"Why, Jinks, I think it's an elegant name! You'll think so, too, if you are ever a real

actress. Think how grand it would look on bill-boards. 'The celebrated Miss Virginia Babcock will appear in,' and so forth."

"No, I shouldn't like it even on a bill-board," insisted Jinks. "You don't know how I hate that name, Sally. Whenever Miss Farnham wants to be particularly irritating she calls me by it."

"Well, it isn't as bad as mine, anyhow," commented Sally. "I've often wondered what name I'd take on for the stage."

"Gracious, Sally, you talk as if it were all really settled."

"It is, in my mind. What's the use of wanting to be something unless you mean to try by every power in the world to be it?" answered Sally with good reason.

"Isn't Sarah your real name?"

"I s'pose it is, but it isn't any better on a theatre programme. And Stebbins would spoil it all, anyhow. No, I've got to choose a whole new name, and I've thought of several. Would you like to hear 'em?"

"Oh, yes, and perhaps I can help you decide which to choose."

"I got 'em out of different library books—a

first name out of one and a last name out of another. One is Violet Van Rensselaer."

"Violet Van Rensselaer," repeated Jinks thoughtfully. "That is very grand sounding, but however in the world would you spell it?"

"Oh, I'd leave that to the printers. Another is Annette de Courcy, and another Edith Grey Davenant."

"I like Edith Grey without the—the—what did you say, Davenport? Edith Grey is nice and—well, they seem to go together."

"But isn't that too every-dayish for a name on the stage?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard very many stage names," admitted Jinks. "Do they have to be fancy?"

"Well, most I've heard of have been; that is, that I've read about, in books."

"Let me think what ones I've heard of," mused Jinks. "There's Maud Adams, who played in 'Peter Pan.' That name is plain enough for you, Sally. And who was it Georgiana was talking about one day, that she'd seen playing 'Romeo and Juliet'? Oh, yes, Julia Marlowe. Marlowe is a wee bit fancy, but Julia's as plain as Sally."

Oh, Virginia!

"Yes, that's so," agreed Sally, "but even so, Sally Stebbins won't do."

"It must be the Stebbins. Sally is rather cunning," observed Jinks. "I wish my name was Sally. Sally Babcock. That doesn't sound so bad! Let's fit a good name to your Sally, Sally—Sally Marlowe—Sally Adams—Sally—Sally—I tell you, I'll look up a name in the telephone book."

"Oh, will you? That will be fine!"

This conversation had carried them to the top of the ridge and Sally had to give all her breath to pushing the laden baby carriage. When they got inside the small wood, she found it impossible to steer the coach at all. Whenever she turned aside for a tree, she was sure to hit a rock. Twice Jinks was just in time to prevent a complete upset.

"I'll leave the coach here, behind these trees," decided Sally, "and carry the baby. Do you mind bringing that thick blanket out of the bottom, Jinks? We can lay him on that."

The picture taking that day was fun, indeed, as the star of the company had predicted. The mill was to be burned, and the heroine

rescued at the last moment by the hero. It was most absorbing to watch the affair being carried out, and Jinks and Sally abandoned their customary lofty perch for a point of view nearer the performers. They found a sheltered nook between two rocks in which they cradled the baby on his blanket, and gave themselves up to the joy and mystery of the scene.

The heroine climbed cautiously up to the top floor of the rickety building and crouched down behind a window casing, in order to be out of sight until the moment of rescue. That is, she crouched down to make sure she could hide and then rose again to look on lazily at the other preparations. In the pond which the broken dam still held, the hero paddled clumsily about in a canoe, ready to dash into the camera's range when given the word.

What interested the children most was the actions of two men at the base of the mill itself. Jinks felt a trifle anxious. Had they any right to burn up the mill? It was considered a landmark about the village. She had often heard Mrs. Harding and Mrs. Elwell speak of its charm. There was some historic connec-

Oh, Virginia !

tion, too, she believed, for Mrs. Elwell had said something about the Colonial Dames wanting to buy it.

“Do you suppose they’ve got anybody’s permission to burn it?” she whispered to Sally. “Ought we to go back home and report them or anything?”

“Report them to who?”

“Why, I don’t know. To the police, I suppose.”

“Not on your life,” responded Sally, with more energy than elegance. “Dad says, never have anything to do with the police.”

“Well, perhaps I ought to tell my father,” pursued Jinks, opening the picnic basket in search of something to stimulate her power of decision. “Have a tart, Sally?”

“It’s too late now to go tell anybody,” announced Sally in a tone of satisfaction, accepting the tart. “Look!”

The men were carrying wide, shallow pans of something, which they placed and replaced in different positions at the camera man’s direction.

Just as Sally spoke the director, who stood to one side and gave the actors their signals

through a megaphone, called out a word of command. The heroine, who had been taking the air at her window, ducked out of sight, the hero poised his paddle, and the two men who had been arranging the shallow pans suddenly struck matches, bent over the platters and then turned and ran.

"They've put oil or gasoline in those dishes to make it burn quicker," exclaimed Jinks, intensely excited. "My goodness, I hope the hero gets there in time! He isn't a very good rower."

"Look, look!" cried Sally, nudging her. "There's the heroine! Oh, my!"

Great volumes of yellowish gray smoke rose high, almost hiding the old mill, with tongues of treacherous red flame licking out here and there. Before the ruined building entirely vanished in smoke, the heroine appeared at the window, leaned far out and waved her arms, calling wildly for help.

Down below, the hero got busy with his canoe. Now well within the camera's range, he waved back at the girl, cupped his hands to shout encouragingly, "Don't jump, I'm coming!" and shot his canoe straight across the

still pond. It was the work of a few seconds to make fast the boat, remove his coat and, with it bundled across his face, to hurl himself through the smoke, right into the burning building.

Jinks and Sally shrieked. To make matters worse, the two villains sneaked forward, under cover of the rocks, and poured more powder into the smoking, blazing platters.

"They'll never get out alive, never!" moaned Jinks. "Oh, we've been witness to a murder, Sally—to a murder!"

Their shrieks had waked the baby. Sally, with her eyes glued to the tragic scene below, reached out a practiced hand and patted him. But the baby was resentful of his hard bed and howled. Sally abstractedly took him in her arms.

"Here," said Jinks, "maybe this'll keep him quiet," and she tucked a piece of sponge cake into the waving fist.

"Oh, Jinks, do you suppose they'll be roasted alive?" quavered Sally, breaking off bits of the cake and slipping them into an eager mouth. "Oh, *look!*"

Jinks was looking, with all her eyes. Out

of the dense smoke and flame staggered the hero. In his arms he carried the form of the heroine, hanging limp and still, his coat wrapped about her head and shoulders.

"Is she dead, do you suppose?" whispered Jinks. "He looks almost dead."

The hero staggered to the canoe, laid his burden down carefully, stepped in himself, and paddled off, just as the two conspirators rushed forward to the bank and shook their fists.

And then—that was all!

"Why, look there!" ejaculated Sally in amazement.

The smoke and flames had died down, and there was the mill, exactly as it had been before!

Jinks rubbed her eyes. Had she been dreaming? A vagrant breeze sent a puff of the dying smoke up to them, and set them coughing. The baby began to cry again.

The canoe came paddling back, the heroine sitting up, very gay and comfortable. The members of the troupe talked together, and presently the director pointed toward the children. He had heard their screams when the

hero rushed to the heroine's rescue, and had looked up and laughed.

As every one turned toward them now, the heroine waved her hand and smiled. A few moments later she clambered up the rocks to join them.

"So you're here, girlies," she said cheerfully. "Wasn't I right when I said it would be fun?" And she chucked the baby under the chin. "I see we have a new member in the audience."

"How did they burn up the mill and yet not burn it?" demanded Jinks breathlessly.

"Bless you, dearie, that is easy—just one of the tricks of the trade. They flashed off some powder for the flames, and sulphur makes wonderful thick smoke; smells a bit bad, but that's all.

"We're going to have an explosion in this next scene," she went on, "and Dickie—that's Mr. Dickinson, our director—wants to know if you girls'll be in it."

"Be *in it*! Be in moving pictures!" cried Jinks. "Oh! Do you really mean it? Oh, Sally!"

"Of course I mean it, girly. It's easy.

They want the whole village to rush out, frightened. All you do is to stand with the rest, looking—well, looking as Dickie said you looked just now when our noble hero dashed in to save me.”

“I can do it,” said Jinks confidently. “I want to be a moving picture actress, myself, some day.”

“So do I,” added Sally quickly. “But what shall I do with the baby?”

“Bring it along. It’ll add to the heart interest. You look old enough to be its mother. Come along, they’re getting ready now.”

Jinks and Sally had very little to do, but they did it with all their hearts. In her zeal, Jinks rather overdid her part, but Sally, standing with the baby clasped in her arms, gave such an excellent picture of stolid terror that the director patted her on the shoulder.

“You’re all right, kiddo,” he said. “I wish you was with us for the last few scenes.”

The company made much of the children. The women took turns dandling the baby, and the men told marvelous stories of scenes they had enacted.

Jinks passed her basket of cakes and tarts,

wishing she had brought three times as many, and the heroine produced an enormous box of candy.

"My, but home baking tastes good," exclaimed the heroine, munching a sponge cake.

"Not if you never get anything else," replied Jinks, her eyes on the candy box. "I've never seen such a big box of candy, Miss ——"

"Arthington. 'Elaine Arthington' on the boards—Sally Hawkins in private life," answered the "star" cheerfully.

Sally and Jinks exchanged glances.

"My name's Sally, too," said the former shyly, "and I told Jinks it wouldn't do for a stage name."

Every one laughed, and Miss Elaine Arthington patted Sally's cheek.

"Never mind, dearie, you've plenty of time to work out that problem, I guess. Dickie, hadn't we better be moving on? Well, girls," she added, "you've been a faithful audience, but the show's over."

"What do you mean?" asked Jinks. "Is that the end of the play? Aren't the people ever to know what happened?"

"Oh, yes, but we've done all we can here.

The next scenes call for water, so we're moving on to St. George-by-the-Sea to-morrow."

"Oh—we're awfully sorry! But thanks for letting us watch you," said Jinks politely. "It has been—just lovely!"

"It sure has," added Sally fervently.

The two children climbed the hill again and put the baby into his coach. He was inclined to be fretful; perhaps he had had too much attention—and sponge cake.

They felt as if some great episode in their lives had ended; and the feeling was very forlorn. Slowly they trudged back along the road home. It seemed very long and shadeless in the hot, late afternoon.

"Elaine Arthington," repeated Sally dreamily. "I wonder if we'll ever meet her again?"

"I wonder?" echoed Jinks gloomily.

CHAPTER XV

NOTHING TO DO

MRS. BABCOCK, in her motor, was bowling comfortably over the smooth road. She had had a hurried afternoon, and was feeling far from placid.

Presently Overton, the chauffeur, indicated an object in the road ahead and at the same moment Tootles put his front paws on the side of the car and began to bark shrilly.

“Hush, the darlin’. Did precious want to scare off the horrid gypsies? Hush, hush, sweetums. Oo mustn’t ever bark at little girls, even if —— Why!”

Suddenly she put up her lorgnette and stared at the forlorn, dusty group—two little girls wheeling a coach containing a crying baby.

Without orders, Overton presumed to check the speed of the car.

“Why—why, *Jinks!*” ejaculated Mrs. Bab-

cock, actually breathless with astonishment. "Stop, Overton."

The motor halted at the side of the road, a few yards ahead of the little caravan. Mrs. Babcock turned in her seat and waited like a magistrate for Jinks to approach. For one horrid moment she fancied it another case of adoption—a howling baby, as she had predicted.

"Now I am in for it, as usual," Jinks muttered to Sally, "but I don't care."

"Jinks," said her mother, clasping Tootles's tiny muzzle with one hand in order to make herself heard, "what does this mean?"

"It doesn't mean anything," answered Jinks defiantly. "Sally's had the mumps and so has the baby, so I can't give it to them. We're just taking a walk. Dr. Penton said I could take a quiet country walk."

"That was with Miss Bingham."

"Well, I couldn't help Miss Bingham's going away."

"Don't be impertinent, Jinks. Come home with me at once."

"Thanks, no. I'm with Sally."

"Get in."

"It wouldn't be polite, because we can't take her, too——"

"Certainly not," interposed Mrs. Babcock sharply, and Sally, who was standing a little aside, but who could not help hearing, colored.

"Because she has the coach and couldn't leave it," finished Jinks reprovingly. "I'll walk on with Sally. It's not far."

Interest in the automobile had stopped the baby's crying, and he stared, wide-eyed. Then he waved his arms and gurgled in friendly fashion at Tootles. Mrs. Babcock stared back at him, unresponsively.

"Jinks, if you don't obey me, I shall ask your father to give you a spanking," she said shrilly. "Here I've been hunting for you and worrying about you all the afternoon and now—you'll be the death of me yet!" And Mrs. Babcock pressed her handkerchief to her lips.

"Go on, Jinks—you'd better," advised Sally, nudging the rebellious Jinks. "Go on, what's the use of stayin'? I don't mind. Anything to save trouble."

"Well, will you come around to the garden



HAD THEY ANY RIGHT TO BURN UP THE MILL?

to-morrow to talk it all over?" demanded Jinks.

"Virginia, come at once," sounded her mother's voice in a final-verdict tone.

Jinks shrugged and moved slowly from Sally's side.

"Remember," she said in a low voice over her shoulder. "I'll expect you at the usual time."

"Will you kindly tell me where you have been and what you have been doing?" asked Mrs. Babcock icily, as the motor sped on.

"Nothing. Just took a walk with Sally and the baby. We've been up in the woods. I should think I ought to be allowed to take a walk without your thinking I've been in mischief."

"Well, I'm thankful if you've not, but as you are in mischief in nine cases out of ten, I fully expected it," replied her mother. "Mrs. Weatherby and I hunted everywhere for you. She wanted to say good-bye."

"Good-bye!" ejaculated Jinks in astonishment. "Why, I thought she was going to stay all summer."

"She's coming back. She had to go to town

on business, and wanted to say good-bye. I could not imagine where you were. I hope you haven't been sitting on the ground and catching fresh cold."

"I haven't caught cold, and I don't see why you didn't let me walk back with Sally."

"Because I can't bear to see you in low company. Don't argue about it," and to close the subject finally, Mrs. Babcock began talking to her dog.

Jinks was glad to let it rest there. She had been afraid her mother's questioning would bring out the story of the moving pictures, and while she herself could not see any harm in what she had done, she felt convinced that, for some mysterious reason, her elders would.

She felt dull and forlorn. There seemed to be nothing to do, now that the excitement of the last few days was over. If only she had some one in whom to confide her wonderful experience of that afternoon! But there was no one. She was afraid to trust Gussie with the wonderful secret that she had actually taken part in moving pictures!

She did describe the burning of the mill to

Gussie, in the most graphic terms, to Gussie's great delight. But she was careful not to mention the after-scene, and the part she and Sally had taken in it.

The mail arrived, as usual, the next morning while the family were at breakfast. Naturally there were no letters for Jinks. She finished her porridge and egg, and fidgeted impatiently. Her father was absorbed in his paper, and her mother seemed to have more interesting letters than common. She looked almost lively, Jinks thought.

"If you have quite finished, Jinks, you may be excused," said Mrs. Babcock presently.

Jinks, surprised but grateful, hurried out of the room. As soon as she was through the door, Mrs. Babcock spoke to her husband.

"Here is a letter from Amabel Gillette, James. They are planning such a wonderful motor trip, up through the Berkshires and on to the White Mountains. They wish us to join them. Wouldn't it be perfect!—If it weren't for Jinks."

"I could not possibly go, my dear. I have had as much holiday as I can take this summer. That strike in the spring tied us up and we are

behind with all our orders. But I wish you'd go."

"Amabel does suggest that—if it should be impossible for you to get off. But how can I go and leave Jinks?"

"Jinks is all right."

"Not with Miss Farnham ill. Who would look after her?"

"I would."

"James, do be practical. How could you look after her, at the mills all day? Why, she would be in a dozen kinds of mischief a day. And Gussie just aids and abets her. But I should love to go! If only they'd postpone the trip for a week, Elizabeth would probably be well.

"Or Mrs. Weatherby would be back. What hard luck it is, to have everything go wrong at once. If Mrs. Weatherby were here I might ask her to come over for a few days, to look after Jinks. She seems to find the child amusing. But—she isn't here, Elizabeth isn't in a fit state for the responsibility, and so I must just give it up."

In excusing Jinks from the room, it had been Mrs. Babcock's kind intention to spare her

feelings. But Jinks, standing in the pathway just outside the dining-room windows, trying to plan something to do, heard every word, and was made miserable.

"I just seem to be a nuisance to everybody," she reflected gloomily. "I don't see what I was ever born for, anyhow."

Jinks was really feeling very depressed. That state of being "low in her mind" which had worried Gussie when Jinks was first taken ill, had returned in greater force.

Lack of companionship, a fancy fed for a few days on foolish excitement, followed by the flatness of reaction, all had their effect. As a matter of fact, Jinks was run down by her sharp attack of illness and needed a tonic.

Dr. Penton saw as much, when he called that morning, and prescribed for her. Also, he pronounced her quite recovered as far as the particular disease was concerned.

But a tonic takes days to produce any effect, and Jinks needed an immediate restorative.

After the doctor's departure, Jinks wandered about the place, seeking for something to do. She strayed into the sunken garden. This spot almost never failed to offer some

form of entertainment, even if it were only poking the frogs off the lily pads.

But this morning Jinks could only stare at the placid pool and wonder how much of a sensation it would create if she should throw herself into its depths and drown her miseries—like a heroine of romance. Tears of self-pity rose to her eyes at the scene she conjured up, when a certain memory awakened—of the day when she had nearly drowned in the pool, and had been hauled out by the heels. How horrid and slimy it had been! And Gussie said she had not looked at all like a heroine of romance. Neither had the feeling been pleasant or desirable. No, she would not try drowning.

“Mother may want to be rid of me, but it’ll have to happen some other way,” she thought, and continued her walk in real bitterness of spirit.

Habit led her footsteps down to the lilac bushes, through their sheltering circle and on across the lawn to the Harding house. Little Kate’s staunch loyalty and admiration had always been a cure for the blues.

But half-way across, Bridget, Mrs. Hard-

ing's maid, appeared, walking quickly and waving her arms. Jinks stopped and stared. What was the matter? A sickening fear gripped her heart. Little Kate was worse! Did any one ever die of the mumps, she wondered.

"What's the matter?" she demanded, as soon as Bridget was within hailing distance.

"Mrs. Harding doesn't want you to come over," answered Bridget, breathlessly.

"Is little Kate—*worse*?"

"Oh, no, she's doing finely."

Jinks was affronted. For the moment she forgot that she might still be considered in a state to spread contagion.

"Oh, if Mrs. Harding doesn't want me, of course I'll stay away," she said stiffly, and turned about face.

Bridget caught sight of a quivering lip and her warm heart was touched.

"Wait, wait, Miss Jinks, you don't understand," she called, still panting a little.

Jinks checked her run to a walk. She was fair-minded and always ready to hear the other side. Bridget caught up to her and stood breathing hard.

"I've got some napkins bleaching over here," went on Bridget; "do you mind if I turn 'em while I explain?"

"Goodness, is it a long story?"

Bridget examined the remains of certain fruit stains and spread the squares of snowy damask again on the sunny lawn.

"Oh, no, only I mustn't waste time. You see, they've kept Miss Kate to herself most careful. If she'd had smallpox they couldn't 'a' been more watchful, the trained nurse says. Because they're hopin' the other two won't get it. Miss Georgiana's mother, she was quite put out that Miss Georgie couldn't come home when the time was set. And you see, if she comes down with mumps now, it'll make a dreadful long time."

"I see—and they're afraid I might give it," replied Jinks, her hurt pride soothed.

"The nurse says," went on Bridget conversationally, "that mumps is the peskiest disease there is, comin' and goin', she says. You always have to wait three weeks before you can be sure you aren't goin' to have it, and then, when the three weeks is up, and you're sure you're safe—down you come with it."

“Oh, I hope Georgiana won’t do that!” exclaimed Jinks. “If she did,” she added with the air of a martyr, “I suppose they’d find some way of blaming it on me.”

Bridget looked at her with admiring eyes.

“It do beat all, the things you think to do, Miss Jinks,” she said wonderingly. “Gussie tells me about ’em. Gussie thinks you’re a wonder.”

“Does she?” asked Jinks, gratified. “That’s real nice of Gussie. The trouble is, Bridget, that people don’t understand me.”

Bridget spread the last napkin.

“Oh, well, I guess they will, some day,” she said consolingly. “Miss Georgiana is the messiest child about eating peaches!” she added. “She’s stained up some of the best napkins. Well, good-bye, Miss Jinks. I’ll be glad when we’re all well again and you’re back, playin’ about. It’s kind of dull without you.”

Jinks retreated to the lilac bushes, cheered for the time being by Bridget’s admiration—and by the realization that Georgiana had one small fault, at least; she was “messy,” eating peaches.

But the cheerfulness soon died out, like a flame in need of fuel. Jinks could think of no form of amusement. Bridget's discussion of the peaches made her hungry and she visited Ford in his pantry. But it did not take long to eat three peaches, even when she was careful not to be messy, and Ford, polishing silver, was not conversational.

The morning dragged. It was a hot, sticky day, the kind that always brings a thunderstorm.

"Perhaps Miss Farnham's feeling better and will play dominoes with me," she thought, and went up-stairs. "Goodness, I am hard up for fun to want to play with her!"

But Miss Farnham, still rather swollen and uncomfortable, and moreover at the crisis of an exciting novel, was in no mood for dominoes.

"I don't believe you'd better stay in here, Jinks," she said diplomatically. "I don't suppose you can get the mumps a second time—not so soon, anyhow. But I'm sure the atmosphere of a sick-room isn't good for you. Run and play out-of-doors. You look pale."

So Jinks departed, cross and out of sorts.

Nobody wanted her!

At luncheon Mrs. Babcock was absent-minded and entirely wrapped up in attentions to Tootles. The sight of Jinks reminded her of the great pleasure she had had to give up, and she felt resentful. Jinks was glad to finish her meal and hurry back to the garden.

“I s’pose Sally’ll disappoint me, too,” she thought crossly. “She won’t come and—oh, what’s the use! I *hate* stories, they are always so cheerful!” And she thumped the book she carried. “I wish I was a real actress. I’d always act tragedies. My plays would never have happy endings, and then I’d keep them true to real life.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

SALLY did come, and at the expected time, but her arrival did not bring joy. Sally's eyes were swollen and red, her cheeks tear-stained and pale.

"Oh, Jinks, the baby's sick. Perhaps he'll die! Ma says I did it. He caught cold on the ground yesterday, and we hadn't ought to give him sponge cake. Oh, he's *awful* sick, and Ma says it's all my fault, and she don't know if she'll ever trust me again. Oh, oh, oh!"

"Oh, Sally, I'm so sorry! Oh, dear, what can we do? I thought we were taking very good care of the baby."

Sally sobbed her heart out.

Jinks could think of nothing more to say, and began to cry herself, from sympathy. This was the greatest comfort she could have given Sally just then, and the two girls wept silently in each other's arms for a few minutes.

Sally was feeling sore and hurt. She adored her baby brother, and it was pain enough to see him suffering. But to be blamed as the cause of that suffering was more than she could bear.

Naturally, Jinks recovered first, and while waiting for Sally to dry her eyes, she pondered. And then the idea came to her. It burst, like most inspirations, fully formed upon her.

"Sally!" she exclaimed breathlessly, staring into space as if seeing a vision, "Sally, I know what we'll do; we'll run away! You and I together. I see it all. We'll run away and join Miss Elaine Arthington's troupe. Oh, Sally, won't it be wonderful!"

"But how can we?" objected Sally. "How can we get away?"

"Oh, it's easy."

"Perhaps it would be for you, but it's different with me. I sleep with Edna an' Carrie, 'nd they'd be sure to hear me going out in the night. Besides, now that the baby's so sick, Ma's up a lot. Why, last night she sat up with him 'most all night."

"Oh, dear, is he as bad as that?" asked Jinks in an awed voice. "I'm awful sorry."

Sally fell to crying again.

"Well," said Jinks, her mind not to be kept for long from her marvelous new project, "if—if anything should happen to the baby—which of course I hope it won't," she added quickly, as Sally sobbed harder than ever, "and your mother really feels that you are to blame, Sally, why,—she won't want to see you around for a little while, will she?"

Sally shook her head dolefully.

"I ought to have half the blame," went on Jinks honestly, "because it was me gave him the sponge cake. I didn't know it would do any harm.

"Well, anyhow, Sally, my mother doesn't want me around, either. She's had a perfectly splendid invitation to go on a motor trip. She just loves motor trips, only she can't go because Miss Farnham's ill, Mrs. Weatherby's away and there's nobody to look after me. You see, if I wasn't here, she could go.

"Now, if you and me run away, Sally, why, everybody'll be satisfied. Your mother won't be looking at you and thinking you ought to have taken better care of the

baby, and my mother can go on her motor trip.

"As for us—we'll be as happy as happy! Why, Sally, it's just wonderful!"

"But how could we manage it?" repeated Sally, interested but doubtful of ways and means.

"Oh, that's easy. Miss Arthington went to St. George-by-the-Sea, didn't she? Well, we've gone there often. I know it 'most as well as I know Glendale."

"But how'll we get there?"

"By train from the Forks. That's better than going from Glendale where some one might see us. It only takes three or four hours on an express."

"It would cost a lot of money ——"

"I think I can get money," replied Jinks, a little doubtfully, but Sally's confidence cleared up any uncertainty on that point.

"Why, of course you can—heaps of it," she said eagerly, growing more interested every moment. "And if you'll get enough to lend to me, too, I'll pay you back out of the first money I earn in the troupe. But"—and again doubt clouded her eyes, "how can I get

away without anybody hearing or seeing me? Of course we mustn't tell anybody we're going."

"Of course not. But you're making the same mistake everybody else does, of thinking people have to run away at night when it's ever so much harder to get away.

"Now, this is how *I'd* do it. To-morrow's Saturday, isn't it? Well, Overton always drives to the Forks for the chickens and things, and we'll ride over with him ——"

"But won't he come home and tell that you didn't come back with him?"

"That's so. Wait and let me think. I'll tell him we want to ride half-way, to a picnic in the Orchard Grove. He'll think it's all right if you're with me, you're so much older'n me. Or I'll tell you a still better way. We'll tell him about the picnic, but we'll say we want to go to the Forks first, for the ride."

"Or to see my Aunt Jenny, who lives there."

"Good—and we'll tell Overton he can drop us at the Grove on our way back ——"

"But ——"

"No—wait. When we get to the Forks, while Overton's getting the chickens and mar-

keting, we'll go around to your uncle's blacksmith shop. Then we'll go back to the car and tell Overton that your Aunt Jenny wants us to spend the day with her. She would want us, if she knew, wouldn't she?"

"Of course."

"And that your uncle will drive us back in the cart. I'm sure he would do that, to save us a fourteen mile walk, 'cause the train goes down too early.

"Then I'll tell Overton on the side—you don't mind my saying this, do you?—that he mustn't mention our plan at home because Mother mightn't approve of—well, mightn't like it. So Gussie and Ford—they are the only ones I'll tell besides Overton—will think we're on the picnic."

"Why do you tell Gussie and Ford at all? Isn't it dangerous to have so many people know?"

"I have to tell them, to get any food. We've got to have a lunch with us on the train. Oh, I wonder what we'll do about our clothes and tooth-brushes and things! It would give everything away to carry a dress-suit case."

"I can put everything of mine in a paper

parcel," replied Sally. "And, besides, I haven't got a dress-suit case."

"And I'll put mine in on top of the lunch, after Gussie has packed the basket. I won't take much either. We can buy things there. St. George-by-the-Sea is quite a big town."

"Is it?" asked Sally nervously. "I thought it was—was just the sea with a few hotels and boarding houses. What time'll we start, Jinks?"

"Overton generally starts about eleven, so's to get his cars washed and in order first, and then that gives him plenty of time to get back for lunch. But you'd better be on hand a little earlier, 'cause he might take a notion to start sooner. I tell you, you walk along the road toward the Forks and we'll pick you up. That'll be best, don't you think?"

"All right; only I don't want any of my folks to chance along. Ma might send Tommy and Edna berrying."

"Well, can't you just tell them you're waiting for me?"

"Oh, yes, I'll manage. Jinks, do you think we'll be caught?"

"Not a bit of it. They won't miss us till

night-time, anyhow, and then —— Oh, Sally, I've had such a lovely thought. There aren't any trains on Sunday, and they can't follow us till Monday. By that time perhaps Miss Arthington'll be ready to go on somewhere else."

"But how'll they know where to follow us to? How'll they find out we've gone to St. George?" asked Sally.

"Oh, they're sure to ask around, and the station agent'll tell them where we bought our tickets to. We can't ask him not to tell, you know, because he'd guess right away that something was wrong."

"Why does the station man need to know where we're going? I read in a book once where somebody was running away, and she bought a ticket first in the wrong direction and then changed trains and went back."

"That's a splendid idea!" exclaimed Jinks, the scheme kindling her imagination. "Only," she added soberly, "it'll cost a great deal more money."

"But you can get all of that you want," responded Sally easily. "I'll pay you back my share, of course, out of my first pay."

"That's all right. It'll be my treat," de-

clared Jinks grandly. "Besides your mother'll be much more sure to forgive you if you send her a lot of money. You'd better keep it all for that."

"I hope she will forgive me, and that the baby'll get well," exclaimed Sally, her lip beginning to quiver again.

"Of course he'll get well. Babies always do unless they have an incurable disease. Miss Bingham said babies could get awfully sick, with a high, high fever, all in a minute, and then pop right up again, well as could be, the very next day. You'll see. Miss Bingham is a trained nurse, and she knows."

"Well, I guess I'll go home now, to see how he is, and get my things wrapped up."

"Yes, you'd better go now, 'cause I have to do a lot of thinking and planning. You'd better wear your best clothes, Sally. Miss Arthington'll like us to look nice."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sally, clasping her hands delightedly. "I'll wear my suit!"

"Why, Sally, have you got a suit?"

"Yes. Mrs. Norton gave it to me when they all went into black. It was Miss Nellie's, and it's almost new. The skirt's pretty long,

but the coat fits fine, and there's two shirt-waists to go with it."

"Wear one and take the other to change," advised the practical Jinks. "Have you got good shoes and a hat?"

"My Sunday shoes are pretty good; they've just been mended, but my hat's awful. The baby pulled a big tear in the brim."

"I'll smuggle one of my hats into the automobile for you."

"Thanks—and Jinks, I think I'll tell Ma I'm goin' over to spend the day with Aunt Jenny. Then I can walk out, bold as brass. I'll tell her you've promised to give me a ride as far as the Forks, and then she'll surely let me wear the suit."

"That's fine, Sally. Why, it's going to be perfectly scrumptious. Only, Sally—don't you back out, will you? And when you say good-bye to your mother don't go and act like you never expected to see her again."

"I won't," promised Sally.

"You just remember that you're going to be an actress now, and you can begin to act your part when you say good-bye to your mother to-morrow."

“All right. I’ll just say over and over to myself, ‘I’m only going to Aunt Jenny’s, I’m only going to Aunt Jenny’s’—like it was my part in a play. Then I’ll act like I was only going to Aunt Jenny’s. I can easily do that, ‘specially as I’ll be dressed up in the suit.”

“Good. And remember everything. You’re to be walking up the road to the Forks, just outside our place. Don’t go any farther than the big beech tree. Wait under that till we come. Oh, Sally, isn’t it exciting!”

“It sure is,” answered Sally, her eyes shining. “Why, Jinks, you’re going to be the making of me!”

Sally departed and Jinks put to her own practice the excellent advice she had given Sally, of plunging into her part—of secret conspirator. To the world she must be as usual—she was even a little more irritable to Miss Farnham than her wont, to give a touch of realism—while in her mind she decided weighty questions.

The main question was, how to get money? Sally’s confidence on this point made her determine not to fail. Sally supposed that Jinks had all the money she wanted. That was far

from the case. Mr. Babcock gave her a monthly allowance of five dollars, but that, it is sad to relate, went in sweets and notions at the village drug store during the first week.

Jinks knew it was useless to ask her mother for money without explaining her exact reasons for wanting it. And she would need a much larger sum than she could borrow from Miss Farnham or Gussie.

Had she anything she could sell? She had various bits of jewelry, including a christening gift of seed pearls, but they were all locked in the safe in her father's office. Besides, the village jeweler would be suspicious if she offered anything for sale.

Ah, she had it. Her savings bank! Hurrying up to her own room, Jinks lifted the green bank from its place on the mantel shelf. It was the registering kind, and would not open until twenty dollars had been deposited therein. Jinks examined it eagerly. It recorded seventeen dollars and eighty-three cents. How could she get it open?

"I need two dollars and seventeen cents. I'll borrow that much from Gussie," she

thought, and seeking the good-natured maid, whispered her request.

"It's—it's to help Sally Stebbins," she confided, feeling that that was quite near enough to the truth to pass.

"Why, I'll see," replied Gussie willingly. "I ain't sure."

"Thanks. Bring it to my room, will you—or as much as you've got. And *don't tell*."

"I won't," smiled Gussie, used to those words, for Jinks loved to make mysteries.

Jinks proceeded to rummage among her many pocketbooks and in one dingy old one, forgotten in a lower drawer, she found eighteen cents. She ran to Gussie's room.

"Never mind the seventeen cents, Gussie. Two dollars'll be enough."

Gussie was seated on her bed, turning out her purse. There were a dollar bill, a quarter, and some small change. Eagerly the two bent over the coins and counted them. They brought the amount up to one dollar and ninety-seven cents.

"We only need three cents—no, two. I wonder where I can find them," exclaimed Jinks.

"Ford'll lend 'em to you."

"No, I don't want to ask him. You know you promised not to tell."

Just then Anna, the underhousemaid, knocked at the door. She held a letter.

"Have you a postage stamp, Gussie? Miss Farnham's given me a letter to mail, with two cents for the stamp, and she knows perfectly well what a nuisance that is. If I put the pennies in the bag, Ford'll never find 'em to give the postman, and I can't hang around and watch for him in the morning."

"Yes, I've got a stamp, sure," answered Gussie promptly, and rose to get it. As Anna handed her the pennies she and Jinks exchanged glances.

Jinks hugged herself. She felt that the fates were on her side. Rushing back to her own room with the coveted pennies, she dropped them into the bank, one by one. There was a difficulty when she came to the paper dollar. She could fold it up and stuff it in, but she was afraid it would not register.

Finally, she determined to carry off the game with a bold hand. Going to her mother's sitting-room, she knocked and entered.

"Mother," she said, holding out the dollar bill, "will you please give me two half dollars for this? I want to put it in my coin bank."

"How very virtuous," replied her mother, feeding Tootles with tiny bits of puppy biscuit. "Get what you want out of my bag, and you may keep the dollar."

"Oh, Mother, thank you!" exclaimed Jinks breathlessly, and flew from the room.

Her first impulse was to return the spare dollar to Gussie, in half payment of her debt. Then she hesitated. The journey was going to cost a great deal of money. She had better keep all she had and pay Gussie later.

She turned her attention to choosing clothes to wear and to take with her, also a hat for Sally. Never before had Jinks given so much thought to her wardrobe.

That night, from sheer excitement, she could hardly get to sleep. At about eleven o'clock the threatened thunder-storm broke, with such violence that it woke her again. Sitting up in bed, she listened to the booming of the heavy rain, the crash of thunder cymbals, the singing of the wind.

"How lucky it is we didn't try to go to-

night," she thought, hugging her knees and shivering at the picture her ready fancy called up of two wet, scared children at the mercy of the storm.

"We might even be struck by lightning!" she thought.

As the storm continued she began to grow anxious.

"What if it is a rainy day to-morrow! Can we go? Will Sally be able to come in the rain? It would be dreadful if we had to put it off. There are no trains on Sunday and the troupe might leave St. George before we could get there. Oh, a put-off runaway would be *horrid!*" And jumping out of bed, she pulled up the window shade. A steady, heavy rain was falling.

Anxiously Jinks climbed back into bed and cuddled down. Generally the rain soothed her, told her pretty stories; but to-night it had a doleful sound, hinting at upset plans and defeated hopes.

At last she sank into a restless sleep. When she woke, the sun was streaming into the room, through the window where she had forgotten to put down the shade.

Jinks jumped up with a squeal of delight. It had cleared off! The sun was shining upon the day of her Great Adventure!

CHAPTER XVII

PURSUING THE ADVENTURE

THE next few hours proved an anxious time for Jinks. She fancied that every one suspected her; that every question asked her was a probe. But it gradually became evident that no one saw anything out of the way in her actions. It seemed perfectly natural to Ford and Gussie that she should be planning a picnic, and that she was to be given a lift by Overton.

Jinks had smuggled a hat into the car, and her own things she put in the top of the lunch basket, after Gussie had packed it and gone up-stairs.

Mrs. Babcock had taken breakfast in bed and sent down word asking Jinks to be as quiet as possible, as she had a bad headache. Miss Farnham was still of the opinion that Jinks had better not come into her room, and so the coast was left entirely free for the child to carry out her scheme.

At ten minutes before eleven she and her basket were comfortably established in the tonneau of the automobile, waiting impatiently for Overton to finish polishing the brasses. What if her mother should take a notion to send for her or, worse still, to go to the Forks herself, as she sometimes did on Saturday morning. Why didn't Overton hurry! And yet, if he should start too much ahead of time, Sally might not have reached the meeting place.

At last Overton put away his polishing cloths and brushed his coat.

"You know Sally Stebbins is going along, Overton. We're to meet her on the road, so please go slow and look out for her."

"For an invalid, you manage to have a pretty good time," commented Overton, climbing into his seat and pressing the self-starter pedal.

"I'm not an invalid; not any longer. Dr. Penton said yesterday I couldn't give the mumps to any one."

"So you give picnics instead," laughed the chauffeur. "Are you ready?"

Jinks did not remind him that she had been

ready for the past twenty minutes. She only smiled and nodded. She believed that if she showed any impatience or haste, Overton's suspicions would be roused.

Hardly had the car turned out of the gates along the road to the Forks than Jinks espied a figure walking slowly toward the big beech. Could it be Sally? It looked like her and yet was different; she seemed bigger, more grown up. Then Jinks remembered; it was the suit.

"How nice she looks," she thought. "All but the hat. I hope my hat won't look babyish on her. Overton," she said aloud, "there's Sally now, waiting for us by the beech tree."

"Yes, Miss," replied Overton briefly, and stopped the car.

Sally looked nervous and rather frightened. Silently she scrambled in beside Jinks and the two girls exchanged an eloquent hand squeeze.

"How nice you look," whispered Jinks. "Quite like a young lady."

"I know," Sally whispered back. "It makes me look so old that Ma almost stopped my wearing it. But I coaxed her. I've got

some hairpins in my pocket and I'm going to do up my hair!"

"What fun!"

"Don't you remember what Miss Arthington said, that I looked old enough to be the baby's mother? Well, I remembered that, and thought I'd make myself look as grown-up as I could, so they'd be sure to engage me. And we can make people think I'm taking care of you, on the journey. Oh, I've worked it all out. People won't think it nearly so queer to see one grown-up and one little girl, as to see two kids travelling about alone."

"That's true, Sally," Jinks admitted. "How clever you are to think of it."

"Yes, I almost brought the baby, to make my grown-up-ness seem real-er."

"How is the baby?"

"Ever so much better, just as you said he'd be. Ma was sweet to me this morning, and said she was glad I was goin' to have a nice time with you. She seemed so sorry that she'd been cross to me that my mind most gave 'way, Jinks."

"Oh, Sally!"

"But I didn't give in—and here I am."

She leaned back and looked about her with satisfaction. "Do you know, this is the first time I've ever been in an automobile."

"Why, Sally Stebbins, is it really! How mean of me. I could have taken you for lots of rides, only I never thought of it." Then she leaned forward. "Overton, what do you suppose! This is the first time Sally's ever ridden in an automobile. Isn't that funny? And she likes it so much that we think we'll ride all the way to the Forks with you, and have our picnic on the way back."

"Very good, Miss."

The next thing was to try on the hat Jinks had brought.

"How does it look?" asked Sally anxiously. "It's a little big with my hair in braids, but when I do it up, it'll swell out my head. I thought I could do it up in the station."

The Forks reached, the two girls proceeded to carry out their programme. They had Overton drop them at the blacksmith's shop to see Sally's uncle. In a few moments they hurried back to join the car in front of the provision shop.

“ Oh, Overton,” said Jinks a little breathlessly. “ Sally’s Aunt Jenny would like us to stay to—to spend the day with her, and I think maybe her uncle will drive us part way home in his cart, so you needn’t wait.”

“ Very good, Miss,” responded Overton, finding the arrangement a very natural one. “ Shall you be wanting the picnic basket, Miss? ”

“ Oh, yes!” cried Jinks, so positively that Overton grinned.

“ It’ll help out a boiled dinner,” he remarked, lifting out the heavy basket, which the two girls carried between them.

They went straight to the railway station and began to study the big, general time-table that hung against the wall. It was hard to understand.

“ What train you looking up?” asked the good-natured station agent, coming to their aid.

Jinks hesitated.

“ Why—why, could you tell us a good spot that we could travel to, have a picnic lunch and—and get back around here, early this afternoon? ”

"Ho, ho," laughed the man, "so you two kids are going off on a spree, are you?"

Sally drew herself up in imitation of hurt pride at being called a "kid," but Jinks responded heartily:

"Yes, won't it be fun! You tell us where to go. None of these trains seem to get anywhere."

"Well," considered the man, "you can take the twelve-ten, due here in about five minutes, up to—to Camel's Glen; that's a half hour's run. It'll give you time for your lunch—there's a dandy little wood there, just across from the station. Then you can catch the St. George local ——"

"That's exactly what we want!" interrupted Jinks, forgetting herself for the first time. "I mean—a place like Camel's Glen," she added hastily. "I've seen it, passing through. What train did you say we could get back, Mr. Brown?" she asked with a look of extreme innocence.

"The St. George local," and he pointed it out on the chart. "It passes through here at two-fifteen. You'll have over an hour for your eats, and get back here in plenty of time

to catch the afternoon train to Glendale. Or is Overton waiting for you?"

"Oh, no, we've—we've made other arrangements," said Jinks hurriedly.

"My uncle's cart always goes down to the mill Saturday afternoon," added Sally, helping out bravely.

"I see. Well, your train'll be along in a couple of minutes. Do you want tickets?"

"Yes, please. How much?" replied Jinks, feeling very important.

"Returns, I suppose?"

"Oh, no—no, I'd—I'd rather get the tickets back at the Camel Glen station."

"Oh!" the man's eyes twinkled. "You want to make an impression on the ticket man, I see. Here you are, Miss Jinks. Two to Camel's Glen, forty-six cents."

Jinks counted out the exact change.

"Here comes the train!" cried Sally in excitement. "Hurry up, I've got the basket."

She tucked her own parcel under one arm, picked up the heavy basket and hastened out to the platform, Jinks, clutching the two tickets, following.

At Camel's Glen, they carried their basket

into the tiny wood the Forks agent had mentioned, and had a jolly little picnic. There was no sadness or regret in either heart, not even a consciousness of being naughty; they were too carried away by the excitement of the adventure.

"There's one thing I forgot," remarked Jinks as she munched. "I forgot to leave a note for my mother; they always do leave notes, you know. I might have explained that I was doing it so as to be out of the way and let her go on her motor trip. Did you put a note on your pincushion, Sally?"

"No, I didn't want Ma to know I'd run away until she has to. I want just as short a time to go by as possible between her finding out I've run away and my sending her some money out of my pay. How much do you s'pose Miss Arthington'll give us, Jinks?"

"Why, I don't know," answered Jinks blankly.

"I don't s'pose she'll give us more'n six dollars a week at first, 'cause we're beginners, and Dad says that's not a living wage."

"What in the world is 'a living wage'?" demanded Jinks, curiously.

"I'm not sure, but I think it means not enough to pay your board and wash and clothes and save any for a rainy day."

"Well, we'll just have to try it," answered Jinks cheerfully. "Let's go back to the station. We don't want to miss that train."

The basket was decidedly lighter now, and there was plenty of room in it for Sally's modest parcel. The two children retired to the waiting-room and there practiced hair-dressing. The result was not much to boast of as to tidiness, but it added years to Sally's appearance.

"There," exclaimed Jinks in delight. "I've thought of what you'll be. You'll be my trained nurse! I mean, that's what I'll tell them at the hotel at St. George."

"All right," agreed Sally, feeling ready for any part.

When Jinks asked for two tickets to St. George-by-the-Sea, the station agent said:

"It's too bad you missed the express. It went by while you was over there in the grove. If I'd known where you was going, I'd 'a' told you. The local's pokey."

"We don't mind, so long as it gets there

before dark," replied Jinks cheerfully. "I like to watch the people getting on and off."

She had rarely travelled on a local train, and the novelty interested her. Moreover, there were not likely to be any of her parents' friends on an accommodation train.

There was a period of fear and excitement when the train stopped at the Forks station. What if somebody should see and recognize them! They shrank back as far as possible from the window. Then Sally was inspired to pretend she had lost something under her seat. Jinks bent over, too, to help her look, and so the train pulled out again with no one the wiser.

It was certainly a slow train, there was no doubt about that. It stopped at every way-side barn, and sometimes when there wasn't even a barn. It just could not get by a side track, but every time one appeared would shift over on it, and wait patiently for some other train to go by.

It did this so much that at length it got behind its own schedule, and had to wait longer still for other trains, generally supposed to remain behind it, to pass.

Jinks and Sally were not disturbed by this loitering. From the train newsboy Jinks bought two or three moving-picture journals, some sweet chocolate and lemon drops. Also, they finished off the contents of the picnic basket.

"What a nice basket this is, Jinks," said Sally, closing it for the last time. "If I owned this I shouldn't want any other dress-suit case."

"It's a tea basket. When Mother got a bigger one she let me have this for my picnics. It does look sort of like a suitcase, doesn't it? We'll pretend it is. Lots of people carry them, made of straw."

"Oh, look," cried Sally, opening one of the magazines, "here's a piece about Miss Arthington! See, there's a picture of her jumping from one automobile to another, like she told us that day. Do you remember?"

The children bent over the magazine, spell-bound, and conned the lurid words. The summer light was growing dim. The train running into the semi-darkness of a covered station brought them back to a sense of their surroundings.

“Goodness!” exclaimed Sally in a panic. “What a huge place! Can we have got to New York by mistake, Jinks?”

“No, it’s St. George, all right. I told you it was a big place,” answered Jinks. She was concerned at seeing how dark it had grown. Lights were flashing in the station. “Come on. Have we got everything?”

They followed the passengers out of the car, Sally clutching timidly at Jinks’s elbow. She was overcome by the noise and crowds.

A line of men, shouting at the top of their lungs, hailed them as they stepped out into the street, and Sally felt her heart in her mouth. Even Jinks, though she had seen this display many times, felt a little timorous at facing it alone. The men were merely calling out the merits of the various hotels they represented, the busses of which were drawn up at the curb.

Courageously Jinks walked down the line, and stepped into a bus near the end of the row, labelled “Seaside Hotel.” Sally followed, dazed and frightened. She had thought the men were shouting threats at them, but as there were already six or eight passengers in

the bus, she was afraid to confide her terrors, lest she betray Jinks and herself.

Arrived at the hotel, Jinks approached the clerk with assurance.

"I want a room for me and my—my nurse," she explained glibly. "I'm just getting over an illness, you see, and the doctor thought I needed a tonic and—and a change. And so we've come."

The clerk looked doubtful.

"Your father didn't telegraph for rooms, Miss."

"There wasn't time. You can give us a room, can't you?" For the first time an anxious note crept into Jinks's voice. She had not thought of this complication. How could that clerk know her?

"Not what you've been used to having, Miss."

"Oh, I don't mind. I hate anything fussy. Just so it's got two beds and a bath."

The clerk consulted his book.

"I could let you have one hundred and eighty-seven until Wednesday," he said. "It's not on the sea side, and is in the annex, but it is a very comfortable room."

“All right. Show us up.”

The clerk rang his bell.

“Show Miss Babcock to one-eighty-seven. Your luggage?” he added.

Her luggage! That was another item Jinks had forgotten to account for. In her desire to be seen leaving home entirely without luggage she had overlooked the fact that her arrival at a fashionable hotel without any would seem queer.

“Oh, my luggage! It’s—it’s coming by express,” she explained hurriedly. “This is all we had time to pack,” pointing to the basket, already in the waiting hall-boy’s hand.

Again the clerk hesitated.

“You—pardon me for asking—but you are not coming down with anything con—*catching*, are you, Miss Babcock?”

“Oh, dear no. I’m not coming down with anything. I’m all over it. Dr. Penton said I couldn’t give it to a yellow cat.”

“Very well,” answered the clerk briefly, wondering what “it” was that had sent Mr. Babcock’s daughter flying from home in such an informal fashion.

With her grandest grand manner, Jinks

handed the hall-boy a quarter, and as he closed the door she turned to Sally. The two children hugged each other in thrilled delight.

"Isn't it the wonderfulest adventure ever!" cried Jinks. "Did you hear how he called me 'Miss Babcock,' Sally? Oh, what fun!" She crossed the room and pressed a button. "We'll dine in our room," she said magnificently.

"But, Jinks, ain't this a *terribly* expensive place to stay in? Have you money enough to last till we begin to get paid?"

"That doesn't make any difference here," replied Jinks. "I shall just charge it to Father."

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. BABCOCK IS UNEASY

By five o'clock that afternoon Mrs. Babcock's head felt very much better. The receipt of a certain telegram speeded her cure—a message from Mrs. Gillette to say the motor trip had been postponed for several days, owing to a forgotten week-end engagement.

“By Wednesday Elizabeth is sure to be well enough to be responsible for Jinks,” reflected Mrs. Babcock with satisfaction. “And Mrs. Weatherby will be back, too. Now I can have my trip.” And ringing for Gussie, she began to plan her wardrobe.

Mr. Babcock had not come home for lunch. He rarely took a Saturday half holiday, and this day had been particularly busy, as an important customer had stopped over between trains.

“We are lunching with Norton, as that is nearer the mill and will keep us less time from

business," he had telephoned home. "Please have Overton here at the office with the small car at four-fifteen sharp, to take Bailey to the Forks. The Glendale train leaves too early, and I'm sending him on the five o'clock express."

"I wish James would come home," thought Mrs. Babcock when she had given Gussie her orders. "I want to tell him it is all right about the trip. Ford," she said, as the butler brought in the tea-tray, "has not Mr. Babcock come in yet?"

"Not yet, Madam."

"I wonder if he could have gone to the Forks with Mr. Bailey? Ess, sweetums, him s'all have him's tea—'ittle starved darlin'! Where's Miss Jinks?"

"She's not home yet, either, Madam."

"Why, where did she go? I thought the house was very quiet. I suppose now that Dr. Penton has said she is well, Mrs. Harding has allowed her to go there to play. Have you heard how Miss Kate is getting on?"

"Better, Madam, I believe."

Ford hesitated. Jinks had made him promise not to tell about her picnic with Sally Steb-

bins, and yet he did not like to give Mrs. Babcock the impression that the child was next door. He and Gussie both knew how little welcome she would be there. In the end, however, he said nothing.

"Well, when Miss Jinks comes in, send her up here," said Mrs. Babcock, and devoted her attention to the greedy Tootles.

Mr. Babcock was late getting home. He had been obliged to remain in the office to clear up certain matters his visitor had interrupted.

"Where's Jinks?" he asked, stretching out in one of the dainty wicker chairs for a late cup of tea.

"She hasn't come in yet."

"She ought to be in by now—after six. Where is she?"

"I suppose she is over at the Hardings'. I don't know where else. I've been in my room all day with a dreadful headache. But it is gone now, and James, read that."

The telegram had been taken over the telephone by Ford, and was somewhat hastily written.

"The trip has been given up?"

"No, no—put off for two or three days."

That means they will start on Wednesday instead of Monday, and I can surely join them. Aren't you pleased?"

"You are, I see. But how does a postponement of two days help you?"

"In every way. Miss Farnham will be almost well by then—between you and me, James, I think she is taking a great advantage of her illness to prolong idleness. And then, Mrs. Weatherby will be back."

"I see. And you can shift Jinks over to her?"

"That would not be a bad idea, if she would invite Jinks for a little visit. Then I could stay on longer."

"Where did you say Jinks is?"

"At the Hardings'."

"Oh, then they have lifted the quarantine?"

"Dr. Penton said yesterday that Jinks was quite over it."

"But Harding told me this morning at the office that his wife was not willing to take any risk, however slight, and they wanted Jinks to stay away a few days longer. They are hoping Georgiana will escape the mumps."

"Oh, I hope she will, the sweet child! It is

such an unbecoming disease. You have not seen Elizabeth, of course, but really, she's a sight!"

"Wouldn't it be as well to call up the Hardings and ask them to send Jinks home? I hate to think she has intruded on them."

"Mrs. Harding would never have let her stay if she didn't want her. Sometimes I think Mrs. Harding is rather hard on Jinks."

Mr. Babcock rang the bell and Ford came to take away the tea-tray.

"Miss Jinks has not come in yet, Ford?" asked Mr. Babcock.

"No sir, not yet."

"Well, ring up Mr. Harding's, and ask them to send her home, please."

"Ah—oh—very well, sir." And Ford departed with the tray.

"What shall I do?" he asked Gussie in the privacy of the pantry.

"Wait about five minutes. Miss Jinks is sure to come in any minute, and you needn't tell. They'll think you're telephoning."

They waited anxiously, Gussie peering out of the pantry window. The late summer dusk was beginning to creep up.

"She's never been so late as this," Gussie said at length. "I hope that Sally Stebbins hasn't been leading her into any mischief—a big girl like her!"

A sharp ring of the bell interrupted them.

"You'll have to tell, I guess," groaned Gussie, and Ford went slowly up-stairs.

"Miss Jinks is not at Mrs. Harding's, sir," he said in response to Mr. Babcock's "Well?"

"Not at the Hardings'!" ejaculated Mrs. Babcock, sitting erect on her couch. "Why, where else could she be?"

"She couldn't have gone over to the Elwells'?" suggested Mr. Babcock.

"No, they've gone to their farm. You know they always motor up there for the week-end. I hope the child is not doing any more philanthropic work down in the tenements."

"Whatever she's doing, she ought to be home by now. Ford, you know something. What is it?"

"I beg pardon, sir?" exclaimed Ford, startled by the sudden address. "Why, sir—Miss Jinks went on a picnic to-day, but we expected her home long ago."

"On a picnic? With whom?" demanded Mrs. Babcock, her cheeks beginning to glow.

"With—with Sally Stebbins, Ma'am."

"Whoever allowed her?"

"I—I really don't know, Ma'am. They went this morning—with Overton—to the Forks."

"To the Forks? On a picnic?"

"Well, they were to have the picnic over at the Orchard Grove ——"

"But that is not half-way to the Forks."

"I know, Ma'am. Overton was to give them a lift as far as the orchard, but ——"

"Turn on the light, Ford," interrupted Mr. Babcock.

"Yes, sir," and Ford pressed the button. He hated telling on Jinks, but it was late, and he was growing anxious over her absence.

"Now, go on, Ford."

"Well, sir—Ma'am—Overton told us, when he got back, as how, when they picked up Sally, she said it was her first automobile ride and so to give her a treat, Miss Jinks said they'd go all the way to the Forks and stop off for the picnic on their way home.

“But when they got to the Forks, Overton said ——”

Ford stopped. It seemed too mean to betray Jinks so completely. Let Overton do his share.

“Well?”

“Perhaps you’d better ask Overton, sir. He could explain better than me.”

“Nonsense,” broke in Mrs. Babcock, sharply. “You know what Overton said. Go on.”

“Well, Overton said as how Sally’s aunt that lives over there, her that’s wife to the blacksmith—she had invited the two young ladies—that is, Miss Jinks and Sally—to spend the day with her, Ma’am.”

“How impertinent of her! You don’t mean that Jinks accepted?”

“Yes, Madam. They took the hamper with them.”

“And what time was Overton to go back for them?”

“No time at all, Ma’am, as I understand it. Overton said something about the blacksmith driving them home in his cart—I’m not sure. It was rather uncertain that, Ma’am.”

“Of all the stupidities!” cried Mrs. Babcock indignantly. “Will Jinks never learn to stay at home and behave herself! She does not seem to have any of the instincts of a lady. Did you ever hear of such behavior, James, really!”

“Has Overton come back from taking Mr. Bailey to the Forks, Ford?”

“I’ll see, sir,” and Ford retreated quickly.

Mrs. Babcock scolded angrily. Mr. Babcock listened in silence, as was his custom, and smoked. He was beginning to feel vaguely uneasy. Even if Jinks had spent the day with Sally Stebbins’s aunt at the Forks, there was no reason why she should not be at home by now. He looked at his watch. Half-past six! Lights were beginning to shine out in the valley.

“Overton has returned, sir,” sounded Ford’s respectful voice from the doorway. “Did you wish to see him, sir?”

“Yes.”

Overton himself stepped forward. He was more anxious about Jinks’s whereabouts than any one, and had followed Ford up-stairs to shed what light he could on the matter.

“ You say Miss Jinks and—ah—Sally, left you at the Forks, to spend the day there with some one? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And Miss Jinks did not ask you to return for her? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Then how did she expect to get home? ”

“ She said something about Sally’s uncle—that’s Waller, the blacksmith—bringing them in his cart.”

“ In his cart, indeed! ” snorted Mrs. Babcock. “ Overton, you should have known better. Why did you not come directly to me when you got home? ”

“ I did not know as—as I should, Madam.”

“ You mean Jinks bade you not to tell,” retorted Mrs. Babcock icily. “ It is cruel, the way my servants aid and abet the mischief of that child.”

“ I suppose you know nothing about the hour at which the blacksmith was to drive them home, Overton? ” Mr. Babcock continued quietly.

“ No, I don’t, sir, but as I was coming back from the Forks just now, sir, having driven

Mr. Bailey to his train, I met Waller—that's the blacksmith—going back toward the Forks, so I supposed he had driven the young ladies back, and that Miss Jinks was home."

Mr. and Mrs. Babcock exchanged glances. That odd sense of uneasiness which Mr. Babcock had felt, increased.

"Perhaps Jinks has gone to Sally Stebbins's house with her. She has no idea of time," suggested Mrs. Babcock.

"She has some idea of light and darkness, not to mention hunger," returned her husband dryly. "The approach of the dinner hour should bring her home. I am afraid ——" He paused and then said sharply: "The first thing is to find out whether she is at Mrs. Stebbins's. Overton, suppose you go down there and find out. You seem to know more of the circumstances than any one."

"Yes, sir," replied Overton, almost with an air of relief, and hurried away.

"And bring Miss Jinks back with you," commanded Mrs. Babcock. "They all know more than we do," she added when she and her husband were alone together. "Ford knew

perfectly well that Jinks was not at the Hardings', but he would not tell. Jinks planned this picnic and made them all promise not to tell. Why, for all we know, she may have planned to stay at this person's all night, just for a new experience."

Mr. Babcock found this view of the matter more of a comfort than a misfortune, but he made no reply.

"Well, I must dress for dinner; it is getting late," Mrs. Babcock remarked presently, and rising, strolled into the next room.

Mr. Babcock went down-stairs and stopped at the dining-room door. Ford was setting the dinner table.

"Send Overton to me as soon as he returns, Ford," he said briefly, and entered the library, where he paced the floor anxiously.

In a very few moments Ford appeared in the doorway.

"Overton is here, sir. He says ——"

The chauffeur thrust him aside and finished the sentence himself.

"Miss Jinks is not there, sir. Nor is Sally. Mrs. Stebbins has not seen either of 'em since Sally left this morning. But Sally was to

spend the day with her aunt, sure enough, so her Ma says."

Both the men servants were anxious and excited.

Mr. Babcock clung hopefully to his wife's suggestion that Jinks might be spending the night at the Forks with her new friends.

"Overton, get the small car ready. You and I will drive over to the Forks and fetch Miss Jinks."

"Dinner is served, sir. Will you not wait for that?" asked Ford.

Mrs. Babcock, in a handsome evening frock, trailed down the stairs.

"Why, James, why aren't you ready for dinner?" she exclaimed.

"Don't wait dinner for me, Lilian. I am driving to the Forks with Overton to hunt for Jinks."

"I should think the best punishment Jinks could have would be to let her stay there all night. A greasy supper, a stuffy bedroom—ugh!"

Mr. Babcock turned suddenly and faced his wife.

"What if Jinks shouldn't be there!"

Oh, Virginia!

"Why—why, what do you *mean*, James?"

"Exactly what I say. We have no real reason for thinking she *is* there. I am going to find her—there, or somewhere. Ford?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell Jansen to take lanterns and search the Orchard Grove. James Smith must go with him. They can go in the work car. No need of excitement, you understand. The children may have strayed away, or fallen asleep in the grove."

Mrs. Babcock sat down suddenly. Jinks's latest prank was taking on serious form. She watched her husband put on his motor coat, gather up an armful of extra wraps, and go out. Then she swept up the stairs and into Miss Farnham's room.

"Jinks is lost! Jinks is lost!" she wailed, and sank, weeping, into a chair.

CHAPTER XIX

NEWS OF JINKS

OVERTON's impulse was to drive to the Forks at full speed, but his orders were to go slow. Mr. Babcock wanted to watch the road as they went along. By now it was quite dark, and Mr. Babcock flashed an electric torch into every clump of bushes, across every shadow they passed.

When they reached the Forks it was only to be told that the children had not been to the blacksmith's house at all!

What was to be done next? He telephoned his news home, hoping vainly that some word had been received there.

It was easy for Mr. Babcock to say there was no need for excitement, but quite another matter to carry out his command. Mr. Babcock's message plunged the household into a turmoil of dismay. When Jansen and the undergardener returned and reported no success, there was almost a panic.

Mrs. Babcock went into a state of collapse,

and Miss Farnham, wild with terror, sent for Mrs. Harding.

Mr. Babcock, quiet, outwardly cold, more stern-looking than any of his employees had ever seen him, directed the search.

Personally, he telephoned the house of every girl friend Jinks had in the village. He even catechized the Elwell maids, to make sure Jinks had not gone with the motorists. He went so far as to send a telegram to the Elwell farm, knowing it could not be delivered until morning.

He sent a larger party to search the Grove, also the region of the ruined mill, the entire outlying district. The village was soon aware of what had happened and every one who could joined in the search.

All night they worked, Mr. Babcock ever in the lead. Job Stebbins was among the searchers and Mrs. Stebbins, dry-eyed and frightened, came up to sit in the kitchen.

Mrs. Babcock, up-stairs, required the constant care of Gussie, Miss Farnham and Mrs. Harding.

"She's *drowned*," she declared. "She's lying drowned, somewhere!"

“Whatever’s happened, Mrs. Babcock, she is not that,” replied Mrs. Harding, beginning to lose patience. “There is nowhere for her to drown.”

“But she is, she is! I feel it! Have they had the lily pond dragged yet? Oh, what shall I do? How can I ever live through this?”

Morning brought no relief. The servants were sitting listlessly about the kitchen, bracing themselves with hot coffee for further effort.

“There’s one thing I don’t understand,” Overton said. “When I took Mr. Bailey to the station yesterday, Mr. Brown, the agent, asked me if Miss Jinks had got home safely? I didn’t understand what he meant, but when I was coming home, and met the blacksmith’s cart along the road, I thought likely Mr. Brown had seen Miss Jinks ridin’ by in it and hadn’t had much opinion of Waller’s drivin’. But ——”

“Overton, why didn’t you say something about that sooner?” exclaimed a sharp voice in the doorway, and every one started.

Mr. Babcock had come to the door to give an order and ask a question. It was probably

the first time he had ever come to his kitchen, instead of ringing for a servant.

"Get the car, Overton. We'll see this man Brown. He may know something."

"The station is closed on Sunday, sir."

"But the man lives somewhere, doesn't he? We'll find him and ask. Have the car at the door in five minutes."

"Very good, sir."

"I suppose you don't know where Brown lives, Overton?" asked Mr. Babcock when they had got started.

"No, sir—sorry, sir."

"I wonder whom we can ask. The post-office will be closed."

"If I might suggest, sir, Plummer, the druggist's clerk, is generally at the store about this time on Sundays. He knows every one in the village, and ——"

"Drive directly there."

Overton was right in recommending Plummer. That young man not only knew every one at the Forks and everything that went on in and around the village, but his knowledge went further. He had already heard of Jinks's disappearance, and hurried out, curi-

ous and eager, when the Babcock motor drew up at the door.

“ Mr. Plummer, I believe? ” said Mr. Babcock quickly. “ Can you tell me where Brown, the station agent, lives? ”

“ Why, yes, sir, ” replied Plummer, a little disappointed, for he had hoped to learn details about the lost children. “ He lives in Meade Street, third house on the left hand side, after you turn into it from the station road. But I don’t believe he’s home. I saw him go past here in his flivver a little while ago.”

“ How long ago, and in what direction? ”

“ He was headed toward the Glen, and he had his wife and the children aboard. His wife’s father lives on the Camel’s Glen road and I guess they were goin’ up there to spend the day. They generally do, Sundays.”

“ What is the wife’s father’s name, and how can I find the place? ”

“ Name is Harris and—let me see. You keep straight along the Camel’s Glen road till you get to the iron bridge—about five miles or so up. Then you keep on for another half mile or so till you see a big red barn on the hill to the right. That’s Harris’s barn. You

turn up the lane and you'll find the place, just over the ridge. Anything I can do for you?"

"You have done a great deal, Mr. Plummer, by giving us this information, and I am very much obliged. Drive on, Overton."

Overton drove on, willingly enough. Mr. Plummer's directions were easily followed, but disappointment awaited them. Mr. Brown had driven his family over to spend the day with his wife's father, just as the druggist's clerk had supposed; Mr. Brown's two children were playing in the barn-yard as Overton turned in at the gate. But all the grown-ups, Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Harris, had driven on into the village of Camel's Glen for church.

"Follow them," said Mr. Babcock curtly. "We may catch them before they get into church."

They met an unexpected obstacle. Camel's Glen boasted two churches, and service in each had already begun. Naturally, Mr. Babcock did not know which church the Harris and Brown families attended. Always disliking a scene, he was not willing to create excitement by sending messages into church in search of

Mr. Brown, and was therefore obliged to wait until the services should be over.

"I will wait at this church, Overton," he said, "and you at the other. In that way we shall be sure not to miss Brown. But I have time enough first to go over to the hotel and telephone."

He called his house at Glendale, in the vague hope that some news might have been received.

"No, we've heard nothing," responded his wife's voice, hopelessly. "I was hoping you had some. But Mrs. Weatherby's here. She finished her business in New York, and motored over from the Fairview Country Club this morning. I am so relieved."

"I am glad if she is a comfort to you, Lilian. We are waiting here to see the Forks agent. I shall be home as soon as I get news."

To Mr. Babcock, the simple service in the little Camel's Glen church seemed endless. He was quite sure he should never forget that morning; the still, hot, sunshiny air, the quiet, empty street, the dull droning of a bumble bee in the sumach bush beside the door.

Among the first of the congregation to come out was Mr. Brown, the man for whom he was

waiting. His face took on an anxious look at sight of Mr. Babcock.

“ Could I have a word with you, Brown? My chauffeur said he thought you had seen my daughter yesterday afternoon! ”

The two men stepped aside. Mr. Babcock felt nervously conscious that a curious crowd was collecting.

“ Why, yes, sir. Miss Jinks and Job Stebins’s oldest girl came into the station yesterday about noon. Miss Jinks said they wanted to go on the train somewhere for a picnic; they had a big basket with ’em. Miss Jinks said somewhere not very far away, so’s they could get back good and early. I told ’em to come here, to Camel’s Glen, seein’s it’s only a short ride from the Forks, and there’s a nice little woods just by the station, you know. They intended comin’ back by the St. George local, which stops at the Forks at two-thirty.

“ When the local pulled in I thought to see the children gettin’ off, but just then I was called to the telephone in the freight office, and when I come out the train had gone on and there wasn’t anybody about.

“ I was sure Miss Jinks and Sally must of

got off, but I was a bit uneasy, I grant you, sir, for some reason or other. I guess because Miss Jinks is always so Johnny-on-the-spot, if you'll excuse my sayin' so, sir, that I'd looked for her to be first off the train.

"Later, when I see Waller drive by in his cart, alone, I tried to believe the girls had come back to the station and gone down by the Glendale local, which I had let go by without particular notice."

Mr. Babcock stood stroking his smooth upper lip.

"That grove you speak of is rather near the highroad. Do you think it possible that—that some passing automobile could have—ah—in short, could have *kidnapped* them?"

"Oh, sir, I hardly think that. Miss Jinks, she's one to depend on for knowin' what she's about. And Sally's a big girl—all of fifteen.

"No, sir, the only thing I could suggest, sir, was that they got carried beyond the station, somehow, and—and is stranded somewhere for lack of money to come back."

"But she could send a collect telegram for funds. Besides, all the conductors know her—or me—and would send her home, free."

“That’s true, sir—if she didn’t miss the last train.”

“Hum, that might be. I think I’ll talk to the station agent here at the Glen. Do you know where I’ll find him?”

“At his own house at this hour, most likely. There’s no train till two-thirty. Could I go with you, sir? Miller’s a stranger in these parts and mightn’t know Miss Jinks. My folks’ll wait.”

“If you will be so good,” answered Mr. Babcock gratefully. “Ah, here is my chauffeur; we can go in the car.”

Overton had watched every person out of the other church, and was relieved, when he came to report, to find Mr. Babcock with the man for whom they were looking.

Mr. Miller was vague at first. He had not sold many tickets the day before, but could not remember the appearance of the few who had bought them. He was not an observant man.

Persistent questioning at last brought a glimmer of recollection.

“Oh—there were two people bought tickets. Not two little girls, though. One was a child, yes, the sort of little girl you describe, Brown,

but the other was a grown-up young lady. I'd swear to that."

"Sally did have on rather grown-up looking clothes, now I come to think of it," said Mr. Brown. "Where did they buy tickets to, Miller?"

"I recollect perfectly now," went on the slow-minded Mr. Miller, "because I saw 'em over in the woods, eatin' lunch, when the express went by. I told 'em when they come in for their tickets that they'd missed it."

"What express?" asked Mr. Babcock, biting his lip to control his impatience.

"Why, the express to St. George-by-the-Sea. They had to go by the local."

"But the local's the one I told them to take back to the Forks," explained Mr. Brown. "The express doesn't stop."

"Then they wasn't the two," replied the agent positively, "for the pair I'm speakin' about bought tickets all the way to St. George."

"Well—what ——" ejaculated Mr. Brown and stopped for lack of words.

Mr. Babcock was fumbling in an inner

pocket and now produced a photograph of Jinks.

“ Was that one of the children? ” he asked.

Mr. Miller slowly took out his spectacle case, removed the spectacles, polished them, and adjusted them on his nose. Then he took the photograph and scrutinized it.

“ Yes,” he said at length. “ Yes, I should say that was a right good picture of the little girl.”

Mr. Babcock produced another photograph—a family group, small and faded. He pointed to the largest child of the group.

“ Is that the other? ”

Mr. Babcock, realizing that he might need a more definite showing of the children's looks than mere description, had obtained these pictures.

Mr. Miller was slower in identifying the second likeness.

“ Well,” he said at last, “ I should say she might have looked like that a good many years ago.”

“ And they bought tickets clear through to St. George, you say? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ I am very much obliged to you, sir. And to you, Brown. Can I give you a lift anywhere? ”

“ Just back to the church, if you will, where my folks are waiting. My car is there.”

“ Back home for a bite of lunch, Overton,” directed Mr. Babcock. “ Then I’ll want the big car. How long will it take to make St. George? ”

“ It’s a good ninety-seven miles, sir, but I can do it easy in three hours if you’ll let me hit it up a bit.”

“ All you like, and begin now. I want to get back to the house.”

Mr. Babcock, when he reached home, found that the excitement he had expected to create with his news had got there before him.

“ Oh, James, James,” cried Mrs. Babcock, “ such an extraordinary long-distance call from a man called Dickinson, I think,—at St. George-by-the-Sea. He says Jinks and Sally Stebbins have applied for positions in his troupe! ”

“ In his—*what!* ” This was a fresh surprise.

"His troupe," Mrs. Babcock repeated hysterically. "Moving-picture troupe!"

"Did you talk to him, Lilian?"

"No, Mrs. Weatherby did. I was too agitated over knowing Jinks was alive."

"And you said ——?" Mr. Babcock asked, turning to their visitor.

"I told him that I was quite sure there had been some misunderstanding, and that I thought you would go to St. George personally, as soon as you got back, and straighten it out," replied Mrs. Weatherby quietly.

"Quite right. I ——"

"He went on to say," interrupted Mrs. Babcock excitedly, "that Jinks was too young for their purposes, but that they'd like to engage Sally Stebbins! Just fancy!"

Mr. Babcock thought over this amazing bit of news.

"It might be a very good thing for Sally," he observed briefly. "I shall start in half an hour, my dear. Gussie?"

"Yes, sir?" answered the maid at once, stepping forward.

"Is Mrs. Stebbins in the kitchen?"

"She may have come back, sir. I'll see."

“Tell her she is to go with us. See that she has something hot to eat and drink, and proper wraps. And have Ford get me a bite of lunch.” He turned to his wife. “Lilian, I suppose you don’t feel like going?”

“I am in no fit state to appear in public, James. Under the circumstances, I think you can deal better with Jinks.”

“I think I can,” replied her husband dryly, and left the room.

In the hallway he met Gussie.

“Mrs. Stebbins’ll be ready to start at any time, sir,” she said, “and thanks you for givin’ her the chance to get to Sally.”

“Thank you, Gussie.” Something in the maid’s voice made him pause. “What is it, Gussie? You have been crying.”

“Yes, sir—that is, no, sir. I’m just glad, sir, that Miss Jinks is found. You don’t suppose those moving-picture people bribed the girls to run away?”

“Had they known them before?”

With tears and sobs, Gussie told what she knew of the expeditions to the ruined mill, and repeated Jinks’s threat to run away.

“I’d forgotten all about that, sir,” she said.

“I never thought she meant it, or I’d have told. And oh, sir—please don’t be too hard on Miss Jinks! I don’t think she’s just altogether to blame—leastwise, she never meant any harm, sir.”

“Well, whatever or whoever is wrong, you are not at fault, Gussie. And I wish to thank you for your loyalty and faithful service.”

He left Gussie gasping. Such praise from her employer was only short of marvelous.

Ten minutes later Mrs. Weatherby joined Mr. Babcock in the dining-room.

“I am going with you, if you will take me,” she said. “I think perhaps I can be of some help to Jinks.”

“And to me, Mrs. Weatherby. I can never thank you enough!” exclaimed Mr. Babcock, and the cold, sarcastic voice actually trembled.

CHAPTER XX

CONCLUSION

JINKS and Sally slept late. Never in her wildest dreams had Sally imagined such luxury. She had wakened at her usual hour and had a fright at opening her eyes upon such strange, magnificent surroundings. When recollection came to her she smiled, stretched her arms luxuriously, and fell into a placid sleep. It was the beginning of a new and wonderful life for Sally.

They dressed slowly, and breakfasted, as they had dined, in their own room. It was after eleven when they started forth in search of Miss Elaine Arthington and her company.

It had occurred to Jinks to consult the hotel clerk as to Miss Arthington's stopping place, but she thought better of it. The clerk had not seemed at all sympathetic the evening before.

"I guess we'll see them advertised somewhere," she said. "Or maybe they'll be on the beach. Every one is on the beach at bathing time. Come along."

"Perhaps they'll be at work somewhere on one of their acts," suggested Sally, staring about her wide-eyed as they passed through the handsome drawing-room with its cushioned willow furniture and gay cretonne hangings. The room was filled with well-dressed women, and Jinks hurried through, fearing some one of them might recognize her.

"Let's go right down to the beach," she said. "It's the right time to see everybody around."

"My, Jinks, isn't it all wonderful!" exclaimed Sally breathlessly. "I—I didn't know there was so much grandeur in the world."

"Pooh, this isn't much," replied Jinks, who had always heard her mother speak of St. George as a "simple, rather pokey place." "Just you wait till we go to New York with the troupe. I'll take you all around and show you everything; the subway, the Zoo, and the Woolworth building. And we'll go to the theatre, Sally—not the movies—and see a

regular play, like ' Peter Pan ' or ' The Blue-bird,' or perhaps a grown-up play.

" And, Sally, wouldn't it be funny some time to go to the movies and see ourselves! "

" Oh, *Jinks!* "

They had come out on the wide board-walk that skirted the beach, and Sally stared, breathless, at the crowds of fashionably dressed people moving up and down. They crossed to the railing and stood looking down on more crowds. Crowds that blackened the sand for all the world like a swarm of ants on a lump of sugar. There were more people gathered down there than Sally had supposed were in the world; certainly in her part of the world.

" What has happened? " she asked excitedly.

" Where? "

" Why, down there—all around! There are such crowds and crowds! It—it scares me, *Jinks.* "

" Why, it's just the regular Sunday crowd. "

" My goodness! " gasped Sally. Then she sighed hopelessly:—" We'll never find Miss Arthington, *Jinks.* Why, there are millions and millions of people down there! I should say everybody did go to the beach. "

“Nonsense, you’ll see as many people as this every day on Fifth Avenue,” replied Jinks easily. “Come along, we’ll find them somewhere. Let’s walk up and down first, and maybe we’ll see them. If we don’t, I’ll ask at the hotel where they are stopping.”

Sally interrupted her with an excited little shriek.

“Why, there she is! Right down there! There’s Miss Arthington, Jinks! Yes, and a lot of the others.” And she pointed to a number of gayly dressed people clustered under a striped umbrella, just below them on the sand. “How can we get down? It’s a pretty high jump.”

“There are steps down every little way. See, there are some, just ahead. Come on,” and Jinks rushed pell-mell down the steep flight.

A very astonished group stared at their headlong approach.

“How do you do, Miss Arthington? We’ve run away from home to join your troupe,” announced Jinks excitedly.

“*What!*” ejaculated Miss Arthington, as

soon as she could get her breath. "Run away from home? Why, you naughty children!"

"Did you run as fast all the way as you came down those steps?" asked the "funny man" of the company.

Sally's feelings were hurt at being called a child, and one hand flew to her put-up hair. But Jinks answered easily:

"Oh, that's all right. Our families don't want us. And, you know, you said you wished you could have us—or Sally, and I thought you'd take me, too. Most 'movies' have little girls in them."

"It sounds like a business proposition. Sit down and we'll talk about it," spoke up Mr. Dickinson.

The children told readily the story of their runaway. In answer to questions they also gave their ages and family histories.

"Have you ever had any experience?" asked Mr. Dickinson presently.

"Only what we did with you the other day," Jinks answered modestly.

"I've recited pieces and done 'take-offs,'" admitted Sally.

"What sort of 'take-offs'? Do one now," commanded Miss Arthington with interest.

After a moment's hesitation Sally rose and gave an absurdly exaggerated imitation of their reception by the haughty clerk of the hotel, the evening before. Then she became her neighbor, Mrs. Smith, "run in for a bit of a chat about the price of soap with yer Ma, m' dear." The company was convulsed with laughter.

"I've always told Ma I meant to be an actress, as soon as she didn't need me at home any more," she said in conclusion.

"Well," observed Mr. Dickinson at last, "we'll see. Where are you stopping, girls?"

"At the Seaside Hotel," answered Jinks, "but we'd like to come to your hotel as soon as you engage us."

Mr. Dickinson checked a smile and replied gravely:

"I see. Well, we can't sign any contract on Sunday, because that would not be legal—not according to law, you know. But we'll see. Suppose you come back this afternoon,—say,

to this same place at four o'clock. How will that do?"

The children looked disappointed. They had not expected any delays.

"It is all right, girlies," put in Miss Arthington cheerily. "We just want to talk things over a bit and consider what parts we have that you could take, you know."

That sounded more promising, and Jinks said briskly:

"All right. Then I suppose you'll want to begin talking right now. Come on, Sally. I'll show you the sights. We'll be back at four, promptly, Miss Arthington."

"A clever child!" exclaimed Miss Arthington as the children moved away. "And a regular case for her family to manage, I'll be bound."

"They are probably having seven fits now, over her disappearance," added Mr. Dickinson. "I'll go telephone them at once. Where is the nearest long-distance 'phone?"

"But don't you suppose we could take on the other one?" Miss Arthington called after him. Mr. Dickinson paused, and turned. "She'll make a hit, I think, if she's given a

chance. And she's just what we need for 'Who Knows?' We'll be beginning on that next week."

"So she would be. I'll see what can be done," replied Mr. Dickinson thoughtfully, and hurried away.

Jinks and Sally were in a state of rapture. They felt very much as Aladdin must have when he rubbed the wonderful lamp. Everything was seen through a rosy mist.

They wandered up and down the beach, talking steadily of what they expected to do in this wonderful new world, opening before them. They dined in the hotel dining-room, but Sally, so high had her new hopes lifted her, was not overwhelmed.

Long before four o'clock they were back at the appointed spot. They hovered around it, or leaned over the railing of the board-walk, watching for the now familiar figures to re-assemble under the striped umbrella.

Presently Mr. Dickinson hailed them.

"We've decided to meet down at your hotel, if you don't mind," he said. "In the blue parlor. Sorry to have brought you up here for nothing. Do you mind walking back?"

Jinks found this arrangement even more important than a mere meeting on the sands and agreed joyfully.

Miss Arthington appeared from a side street on their way, and joined them. She and Sally walked on ahead, Miss Arthington asking questions and Sally answering with more animation than Jinks had ever seen in her.

Mr. Dickinson walked with Jinks, and she was the one to do the questioning, eager to satisfy all the curiosity of her inquisitive mind.

As they reached the hotel, she stopped suddenly and stared, going very pale. Then she pointed to one of the many motor cars drawn up at the curb.

"Mr. Dickinson," she whispered, a sob catching her breath, "*promise* I can join your troupe! *Please* promise!"

"I can't, m' dear. I can't really, until we've—we've gone through the formalities. Come along, like a good child."

Jinks faced him with a suspicious glance. Then she moved slowly forward, with listless gait and downcast eyes. Mr. Dickinson had betrayed them! He had, somehow, found a

way of sending for Overton to fetch them home. Her castle crumbled about her ears.

“It was too good to be true,” she whispered to herself, struggling bravely to keep back her tears. “Nothing wonderful or fine can ever happen to me.”

At the doorway of the blue parlor stood—no other personage than Mr. Babcock! And seated within were Mrs. Weatherby and Mrs. Stebbins.

“Why, Ma!” cried Sally in amazement.

Mr. Babcock swept his daughter into his arms and held her close for a long moment. Mrs. Weatherby, watching, felt that she could never again accuse him of indifference or coldness.

Jinks found a small measure of consolation in her father’s forbearing to scold her, but it took all the courage of which she was possessed to hold back the angry, disappointed tears.

With bursting heart Jinks listened to the interview that followed, the interview that was giving to Sally all that she had ever dreamed of or hoped for. Miss Arthington was actually engaging Sally to join her company at what

seemed to Jinks—and to Sally herself—a stupendous salary.

“ You realize fully all that this means, Mrs. Stebbins? ” asked Mr. Babcock.

“ Yes, sir,” she replied, patiently wiping away a tear. “ Sally’s always wanted a chance, and I’m not the one to stand between her and it, now it’s come.”

“ Oh, Ma,” sobbed Sally, “ are you sure you can manage at home without me—with all the children? ”

“ How many other children have you? ” asked Miss Arthington.

“ Five others, mem, besides Sally. There’s Edna and Tommy; Edna’s quite handy now about the house. But Charlie and Carrie’s wee mites. And there’s the baby.”

“ We’ve met him,” smiled Miss Arthington, “ and he’s a dear. If Edna can help with the little ones, perhaps you can get on? ”

“ Oh, I’ll manage, mem, but is Sally to stay on right now? I’d like time to do a bit of sewin’ for her, and have a talk.”

“ If you’ll let her stay now, to finish out the pictures we’re at work on, we’ll send her home for a few days, before beginning the next play.

How will that do? And Mrs. Stebbins, don't you worry about Sally one minute," added Miss Arthington with hearty good-will. "She's going to be under my own care. You can have it put down in the contract, if you like, that I'll be personally responsible."

Jinks sat by and listened, in dull misery. She heard the arrangements completed which gave Sally freedom to follow the most marvelous, romantic career in the world! Sally Stebbins a moving-picture artist! While she—Jinks—was to go back home and be a good child.

Sally showered a few drops of comfort into her heavy heart. Rushing across the room, she threw her arms around Jinks's neck.

"It is all your doing, you darling!" she cried rapturously. "I can never thank you enough for this, Jinks, never, never! You are a really, truly fairy princess to bring me my wish. I'll never forget it. And next week, when I come home, I'll tell you all about it!"

Presently Mrs. Weatherby offered to go upstairs with Jinks to pack. A very forlorn little girl threw herself into the depths of an arm-chair and gulped back hurt, disappointed tears.

Mrs. Weatherby gathered her into her arms.

“Never mind, dear little girl,” she whispered. “It is better this way. It really is. Some day you will understand.” And after a while she said:

“How would you like to come to me for a visit? There’s the fairy orchard, you know, and the robbers’ cave on the hill ——”

Jinks sat erect.

“Oh, I wish I could! But Mother’d never let me. She’ll say no to punish me for coming here,” and her head sank dejectedly on Mrs. Weatherby’s shoulder. “I can just hear her say, ‘Oh, Virginia!’”

“But she will let you, dear. At least, your father has given his permission. It is to be a long visit, Jinks—with only one condition.”

Jinks’s tears began to flow.

“Of course there’ll be something to spoil it.”

“I am hoping this condition will not spoil it, dear.”

“What is it?” asked Jinks, interested in spite of herself.

“That you will share with me any big idea that comes to you of doing good.”

“ You mean my—my ‘ fairy princess ’ plans of doing good? ”

“ Exactly. You like to be a fairy princess, don’t you? Well, I’ll tell you a secret. I have always wanted to be a fairy godmother. Don’t you think we ought to work well together? ”

Jinks gazed at her in astonishment. She could not believe that a grown-up could know—could understand.

“ It sounds wonderful! It seems—seems better than being a moving-picture actress! ” She clapped her hands ecstatically. “ Oh, Mrs. Weatherby! ”

Mrs. Weatherby took the hands in hers. “ Oh, Virginia, ” she smiled.

